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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 21 April 1997

Lundi 21 avril 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 avril 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Today marks the beginning of Information Rights Week in Canada, a week dedicated to discussion on the rights of all Canadians to accessible and affordable information. On this side of the House, I can report that the Ontario Liberal Party strongly believes in the individual's right and freedom to choose and access information.

There's a growing fear sweeping across Ontario that the freedom to information liberties we now enjoy is being threatened by this government's Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act. By eliminating provincial library transfer payments to municipalities, Ontarians, particularly those in small and northern communities, may lose community library services altogether. This is a direct violation of our information rights.

By allowing user fees for electronic forms of information, this government is infringing on the rights of all Ontarians to government documents, which in many cases are now only available in an electronic format. This creates a system where those who can pay get the information and those who can't pay do without. This clearly is a violation of our information rights.

By removing the obligation for arm's-length, majority citizen participation on library boards, this government is moving towards political and special interest tampering of our library resources. Indeed, as the Peterborough Examiner said just last week, without public participation on library boards, it's not a large leap from financial control to political control and finally to censorship. While some members of this House appear to advocate such a point of view, we in the Ontario Liberal Party stand strongly against it.

I call upon the Minister of Culture to accept the amendments for Bill 109 that will deal with these problems.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Last week over two million Muslims from Canada and around the world performed the annual pilgrimage of Hajj in the Saudi Arabian city of Mecca. However, this year's Hajj was struck with a tragic fire that swept the tent city on the plains of Mina. Hundreds of pilgrims perished in the flames, while many more were trampled to death.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to offer our condolences to the Muslim community of Canada and the

families of the victims. I also want to take this opportunity to wish the Muslim community a happy Eid-ul-Adha, which fell on the day following Hajj.

Last week also saw the celebration of Baisakhi in the Canadian Sikh and Hindu communities. This is of course a great occasion of joy and celebration. Again, to the Hindu and Canadian Sikh communities, a joyous and happy Baisakhi on our behalf.

The celebration of Eid-ul-Adha and Baisakhi in Canada is a testament to the multicultural nature of this society and our ability to work together as a community, embracing the religious and ethnic diversity that we have in this country. It is indeed in this unity that our diversity is most cherished, and it is that unity and diversity that make Canada the best place in the world to live and work.

ANNIVERSARY OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's an honour to be able to rise today to recognize the valiant sacrifice of many young Canadian soldiers and to say a few words about the anniversary of Vimy Ridge.

It was a wet 5:19 am, April 9, 1917, 80 years ago, that over 100,000 Canadians in four divisions fought side by side and took a key, heavily fortified position. This was a feat that neither the French nor British forces had been able to accomplish.

It was young Canadian soldiers such as Mr Henry Price, a veteran and resident of Oshawa, who advanced on the hill with the 128th Battalion. These brave soldiers demonstrated to the world what could be done with Canadian planning, determination, courage and a commitment to duty.

Mr Price was born in 1897 and will celebrate his centennial birthday this August 12. Mr Price, when in Toronto, was a CPR telegraph operator at the corner of Yonge and King before the war. As a signaller in the war, Mr Price was constantly reporting on the enemy from within enemy territory, well ahead of the front lines.

Veterans such as Mr Price, a signaller at Vimy Ridge, have made great contributions to the world, Canada, Ontario and our communities. In the city of Oshawa, veterans and their associations continue with pride to support local sports, youth and many other activities within our communities. All gave some and some gave their all in the performance of what they saw as their duty and trust to their comrades, families and nation.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In its quest to find scapegoats and victims for the so-called Common

Sense Revolution of Mike Harris and his band of right-wing zealots, the revolutionary Harris government has determined to bulldoze Bill 104 through the Legislature with its 82-seat majority and, in doing so, deprive thousands of loyal, dedicated, capable and experienced employees of boards of education of their livelihoods.

Under the provisions of Bill 104, the Harrisites seem determined to demean and downplay the importance of non-instructional or non-teaching staff by encouraging boards of education to privatize and outsource positions which have traditionally been an important part of the educational team. Anyone who is at all familiar with the field of education is aware that the educational support personnel — librarians, guidance counsellors, custodial, maintenance and cleaning staff, and secretarial and administrative staff — are indeed part of a team which functions best when there is certainty, continuity and coordination.

This bill could result in an enormous loss of jobs, the disruption of thousands of lives, the stripping away of benefits and the cutting of wages and salaries for people who have devoted themselves to education for years and sometimes decades.

I call upon Premier Harris to withdraw Bill 104 and engage in a meaningful consultation that will reveal the immense value of the staff the Premier is so eager to marginalize and reject. Educational employees in Ontario will not forget the attack on their integrity and worth.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On Saturday past, the workers at Stelpipe Page-Hersey, who, as you know, were forced on to picket lines almost six months ago, gave a resounding and solid no to the embarrassing, indeed insulting, offer of the employer, Stelpipe. Some 97% of the workforce membership showed up for a vote, and 96.8% of them said no to an offer that required more from them by way of concessions than offered them by way of what they had been seeking: modest pay increases and some fairness and decency when it comes to pension.

These workers and workers before them have been making profits for Stelpipe and Page-Hersey in the city of Welland for decade after decade after decade. Over the last four years, these same workers have improved or increased productivity by 120%. Now they're being called upon by Stelpipe, with the assistance and the endorsement of this Harris government, to take cuts and to do with less when they deserve more. They deserve far better treatment from a company that has enjoyed their hard work and productivity for so many generations.

I speak for the vast majority of people in Welland-Thorold and across Niagara region when we express our strong support for those workers and demand for them the same fairness and decency by their employer, by way of modest pay increases and decent pensions, that we would expect for any hardworking person in this province.

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TREVOR WILLIAMS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): In recognizing great Ontarians, it is my pleasure to stand in the House

today and introduce you to an individual in Halton North who has made an outstanding contribution to our community.

On March 18, Trevor Williams was honoured for his lifetime of achievements as the 1996 Georgetown Lions Club Citizen of the Year. A resident of Georgetown since 1929 and a veteran of the Second World War's D-Day in 1944, Trevor's dedication to his community spans over 50 years.

Among his achievements are a 35-year member of Georgetown Agricultural Society; a volunteer ambulance driver for 25 years; a volunteer firefighter; a Legion member for 37 years; an active member of the cancer society for 35 years, and still drives patients to various cancer treatment centres; a 30-year volunteer of the Red Cross and a 98-time blood donor; and an active member of St John's United Church for almost 50 years.

It is humbling, in this day and age of short attention spans, to put into perspective the kind of contribution in time, dedication and commitment that Trevor Williams has made to Halton North. Trevor, I salute you for your efforts. You're an example of the type of Ontarian we should all strive to become and are one of the reasons that this province is such a great place to live.

To Trevor, his wife, Nora, his four children and 10 grandchildren, I say congratulations.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today is a very difficult day for the people in Windsor-Sandwich, in fact for the people for all of Essex county. As the Conservative caucus knows, the emergency room on the west side of Essex county is now closed. You knew 18 days ago when it was going to close. You had plenty of time, we told you daily that it was 17 days to go, then 16 days to go, but all of you refused to help get a message to the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province that we needed to have measures in place in Windsor before that emergency room was closed.

Today, after a weekend of no emergency service on the west side of Essex county, what we have is more patients, longer waits, turned ER into a war zone. The reason I'd like to bring this to your attention today is that what the hospital closing commission, which has been going around, traipsing around Ontario, has told you are announcements of what will be coming to your neighbourhood in your town and in your city.

What we currently have in Windsor-Sandwich is no emergency service for the people who live on the west side of Essex county. It is not acceptable. We asked for a meeting with the Premier and we were denied. We asked for a meeting with the minister and we got a 40-minute phone call of excuses as to why they can't give us even interim support, some interim help for the people of Windsor-Sandwich. It's not acceptable.

ADULT EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Adult learners spoke out this morning. The beloved and esteemed members of our press gallery I believe were a bit alarmed to come into their gallery this morning to find dozens of

adult learners there to give a message to the Harris government that they are very alarmed and frightened that they are going to lose the education system for adults in this province.

They pointed out this morning to the people of Ontario and to the Premier and to the minister that if they don't learn English when they're new to this country, then they can't get a job and they can never make it. They also pointed out that if adults who dropped out of school for whatever reason can't go back and get an education, then they're unable to help their children with their homework and unable to make sure their children advance to higher levels. It was an important message for this government to hear, and I apologize to the members of the press gallery for perhaps a little bit of an unusual event, but I think the message was very clear.

I also want to point out that today is a very special day in the House. One of the very few fallouts, I suppose, for us in the megacity filibuster was that we can't wear buttons here any more, but we can still wear the colour yellow. As you can see, I'm wearing my yellow sweater today, and I notice that many other people are wearing yellow. It of course symbolizes the fight against —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Yellow is not out of order.

EARTH DAY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Tomorrow people around the world are celebrating Earth Day, and there is no better day to reinforce this government's commitment to protecting the environment. As custodians of the environment we take our job very seriously. We're not just talking about environmental protection; we are taking action to ensure that there will be clean air and water for future generations.

Since we took office in 1995, we've moved carefully and deliberately to ensure Ontario's environment is better protected. We've improved environmental assessment practices, making them more effective in protecting the environment, more timely for everyone involved and less costly; we are updating the regulatory system to ensure strong and consolidated environmental protection in Ontario; we are developing an aggressive smog plan that will ensure that people in this province have cleaner and healthier air to breathe; and we've introduced new soil cleanup guidelines which will allow for quicker cleanup of contaminated sites so they can be turned into cleaner productive lands.

We will continue to set tough environmental standards and we will be vigilant in ensuring that these standards are met. We are determined to make our environment next year better than this year and that our environment in 1999 will be better than our environment in 1998.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR ORIOLE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Elinor Caplan, member for the electoral district of Oriole. Accordingly, my warrant has been issued to the chief election officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to introduce in the government's gallery the former member for Wellington, Mr Jack Johnson. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Please join me in welcoming the 10th group of pages to serve the 36th Parliament of Ontario: Michael Berlin, Mississauga West; Christopher Bremer, Simcoe Centre; Megan Campbell, Waterloo North; Emma Cochrane, High Park-Swansea; Jillian Davey, Lambton; Jonas Didzbalis, Etobicoke West; Amanda Dube, Windsor-Riverside; Scott Evans, Cambridge; Erika Fagerdahl, Rainy River; Bethany Hammond, Muskoka-Georgian Bay; Timothy Johnson, Durham West; Kaley Keefe, Mississauga East; Peter Lipscombe, St George-St David; Christina MacDonald, Eglinton; Tyler McNaughton, Chatham-Kent; Suzanne Morrow, Markham; Jonathan Odumeru, Guelph; Michelle Pilozow, Kenora; Ethan Rabidous, Perth; and Stuart Smith, Etobicoke-Humber. Please join me in welcoming the new pages.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BUDGET DATE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): It's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon and talk about the past year that Ontarians have had seeing the benefits of the measures introduced in our government's first budget. Jobs are being created in the province of Ontario —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Just say May 6 and sit down.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, I tried that last year; I thought I would just announce the date and sit down, only to hear a bunch of drivel come from the opposition benches for 10 minutes after.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): After 20 minutes I've already lost control, so that's par for the course.

Hon Mr Eves: I'm sorry if I've helped that along in any way, Mr Speaker. I'll try to make it up to you somehow.

Indeed jobs have been created in Ontario in the last year. Depending on any measure used by StatsCan, one being of course a survey done of employees, it says that 113,000 jobs have been created in the province. If you look at the StatsCan employer survey, it says that 176,000 jobs have been created in the province. In the month of March alone, the federal government says that 46,000 jobs were created in Ontario.

The province is returning to prosperity. There is renewed optimism for a future of greater opportunity.

I am pleased to announce, as I've indicated to my two opposition critics, that the budget will be presented to the Ontario Legislature on Tuesday, May 6, at 4 pm.

The 1997 budget will show how the government's plan is making Ontario better now and will make it better in the future. It will show how our plan is attracting private sector investment and stimulating economic growth that creates jobs. It will show how our plan is returning Ontario to economic and fiscal health while reducing taxes, protecting priority public services such as health care and education, and promoting government efficiency.

The 1997 Ontario budget will show the deficit is coming down and that we are indeed on track for a balanced budget by the fiscal year 2000-01.

The 1997 budget will continue the course the government began when we were elected in June 1995. It will ensure that Ontario leads the way in growth, prosperity and quality of life for present and future generations of Ontarians. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement on the budget date and say that we're looking forward to the budget and an opportunity to debate the government's fiscal plans.

I might say we were surprised at the date. We had been expecting the budget would be presented next week. It's customary, as you know, Mr Speaker, for the Minister of Finance to announce the date roughly a week in advance, and it's clear to us the government is having some difficulty getting its fiscal house together.

There is no question — municipalities will understand this — that the government has downloaded, dumped \$1 billion of extra costs on to municipalities. What's going on right now? Every municipal leader in this province knows it, has called your bluff and has said you are dumping \$1 billion. Every senior citizen in this province knows you have dumped seniors' housing on to property tax. Every senior citizen know you have dumped long-term care on to property tax. Every child who requires social assistance knows the province has dumped its responsibility on to property tax. It is clear the municipalities understand that and will have nothing to do with it. That's why the budget has been delayed until May 6.

On the job front I will quote the minister's own statements. The ministry puts out a document every month outlining jobs. What does this document say? It says, if you can believe the numbers from the minister's own statement, Ontario has lost 11,000 jobs in the last seven months. The rest of Canada over that same period of time has gained 88,000.

We have a serious unemployment problem in Ontario. And what does Mike Harris say? "No, we don't." He doesn't trust the numbers; says, "No, there's no problem." We in the Liberal caucus say we have a serious, significant, dramatic problem in unemployment, and we'll be looking for this budget to spell out the measures that are going to solve the unemployment problem. I would just add that it is particularly tragic among our young people.

What this document shows is the unemployment rate in the first three months of 1997: first three months, unemployment rate among our young people, 15 to 24, all of those young people who have worked hard, many of whom have gotten college and university degrees, looking for work. What has happened to them? The

unemployment rate, and you can see the numbers right here, is 18.5%, up from 16.2% the same period a year ago. So, yes, we'll be looking for the budget and some comment on how they are going to begin to tackle this serious unemployment problem.

The next thing I would like to talk a little bit about is the tax cut, and I hear Mike Harris saying, "Well, the tax cut's paying for itself." He can't believe that. He cannot believe that. Again, I go to the minister's own figures. Here's what they show: that in 1995-96 personal income tax revenue was \$16.2 billion; in 1997, the numbers the minister gave us only a few weeks ago, \$15.6 billion. We have seen the revenue drop from personal income tax by \$600 million at the same time they should have been growing by \$600 million.

There is no question the personal tax cut has cost Ontario \$1 billion in lost revenue. There's no question of that. The minister may yell and barrack from the other side and the Premier may hide somewhere and say it hasn't, but it has. As a matter of fact, the minister's own budget said it would cost \$1 billion. The reason I raise all of this is that when the seniors of this province see what you're doing to them, forcing social housing, their housing onto the property tax — why? To fund this \$1-billion tax break, last year \$5 billion in total, and I might add to all of the business people out there, every penny of that is borrowed money — every penny of it.

The people of Ontario will say, "If we have to deal with a serious deficit problem, tell me again how the province can afford to borrow \$1 billion," which we did do for this tax break, and I might add finally, \$500 million of that tax break goes to people making more than a quarter of a million dollars. The people of Ontario, as we look forward to this budget, should say, "My hospital is being closed, but we can give a tax break worth \$500 million to people making a quarter of a million dollars?" I don't think so.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, I appreciate your assistance.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): We are pleased that the government is going to bring in what I guess will be its second budget, because we too want to debate some of the things that this government spends a lot of time bragging about. We in fact want a chance to examine once again their tax cut scheme, a tax cut scheme that puts two thirds of the benefits in the hands of the 10% of people who are at the top of the wealth and income ladder; in other words, a tax cut scheme for the wealthy.

We also want to point out to the government that today, as we approach the end of its second year in office, there are 100,000 more young people unemployed in Ontario than there were two years ago at this time. In fact there are 58,000 more adults unemployed in Ontario than there were two years ago at this time. In fact, two years into its mandate, by any count, any measure, this government is 600,000 jobs behind the 725,000 jobs it promised in its election campaign document, the Common Sense Revolution.

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But more, we want to talk about the fact that good, stable, well-paying jobs are disappearing in Ontario as a

result of this government, and what we're seeing, as a result of this government, are more minimum-wage, part-time, temporary McJobs: not the kind of jobs that can support a family, not the kind of jobs that can support our communities. This is the historical record of this government.

The government also wants to talk about health care. Well, the health care system in Ontario has never been under greater attack in the history of this province than it is now. In fact what we are seeing across this province are more and more cuts to health care in every community across the province, but it's all part of this government's agenda to prepare the health care system for piecemeal privatization, American-style. That's what we're seeing in our health care system.

Then there is education. What's the history in education so far? We are fast headed towards a situation where you either need to be wealthy or your parents need to be wealthy if you hope to go on to university or community college. More and more, you had better hope that you are lucky enough to live in a wealthy neighbourhood because otherwise the school system in your community or the school system in your neighbourhood is starting to show more and more cracks, more and more holes.

Finally, we see the last element in this government's desperate fiscal plan: to take important health care services, important community services and to throw them down onto the municipal property tax; to take a good fire service and privatize it, American-style; to take ambulance services and set them up for privatization. What we're seeing is a wholesale attempt by this government to turn Ontario into the Alabama of the north. So we look forward to your budget presentation. We look forward to the debate, Mr Finance Minister.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Treasurer, with respect, from your page 1: "Tax cuts have put money in the pockets of Ontarians." I guess it's okay if you're rich and if you can run faster to get away from the field, but when is enough enough? EI, CPP, health levy has taken the tax cut away and we're all very much aware of that.

Your page 2, "protecting priority public services such as health care and education": Thousands of nurses, thousands of teachers are being asked to go on the dole in the next year or two, the fault of this government. Then, Minister, "a balanced budget by 2000-01." At that long-awaited time they'll be out of office. They'll be left with carrying the guilt but it will be a sign of yesteryears.

The figures simply do not add up and the middle class, because of this government, is under a state of siege, under a state of erosion. They're guilty of it. The long-awaited budget will not —

The Speaker: Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We have now given you a few extra weeks to reconsider and to look at the real facts about your

megacity. Think of it as a bit of cooling-off period. We've given you time to listen. We know you have heard but you haven't listened. You've now had the time to listen to the hundreds of thousands who voted against your megacity by way of the referendum. You've had the time to listen to the experts, who tell us that the savings are just not to be found. You had time to listen to groups like the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who are telling us that taxes are going up, and you've had time to listen to your own backbenchers, who have had the courage to speak up on this issue. That kind of courage, it would seem to me, ought to be rewarded and not punished.

Mr Minister, you've had time to listen and we want to know where you stand today. Will you do the right thing? Will you not proceed with the megacity bill?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To the official Leader of the Opposition, he's right. We did listen and that's why we've made almost 30 amendments to the bill. We listened to the concerns about the size of council. We increased the size of council. We listened to the concerns about the trustees. We dealt with the trustees. We heard the concerns about the transition team and, again, we dealt with those.

We dealt with the community councils to ensure that all of the communities have an opportunity to maintain their identity. All of those things we listened very carefully to, to the 600 deputants that came in to the town hall meetings, to the meetings at my constituency office. We listened to everybody and we took into consideration their comments and made 30 changes to the bill.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you've done a lot of things, but by no stretch of the imagination can it be said that you honestly, genuinely and with any real intent listened to the people who are going to be affected by your change. Let's not forget the past, although you're anxious to do so. In the Mike Harris Metro task force, which you were vice-chair of, you said, through recommendations in this report, that the present number of six local governments will be retained. You said that. You signed this report; you endorsed it.

Then in the Common Sense Revolution, at the last page, after you've laid out the master plan for change in Ontario, you say: "The Next Step — Public Involvement," and the last sentence on this page is, "But how we get there will be discussed in partnership with all Ontarians."

Not only are you hiding from the facts, breaking your promises, you're ignoring your backbenchers and you're ignoring the very people that you serve. Another chance, Minister: Will you withdraw the megacity bill?

Hon Mr Leach: Again to the Leader of the Opposition, I'm glad he referred to the Common Sense Revolution, because it did specifically talk about eliminating waste and duplication, getting rid of a level of government. All of those things are happening to municipalities across Ontario, and particularly here in Metropolitan Toronto.

We are eliminating the second level of government, which is going to eliminate a lot of waste and duplication. We are protecting the identities of the communities by establishing community councils, which will give each

of the existing six municipalities an opportunity to ensure that the concerns of their citizens are taken care of. All of those things have been done. We're now moving forward into the 21st century. We have a great city before us, and it's going to be even greater at that time.

Mr McGuinty: The single most important fact that you seem so willing to overlook, Minister, is the fact that 76%, more than 400,000 people who are going to be affected by your change, looked at the bill, found it wanting and rejected it.

Understand, this affects more than just Metro Toronto. You yourself have said that this kind of change is going to be used as a model for restructuring right across the province. If you proceed with 103, contrary to your campaign promises and contrary to the wishes of the people that you serve, I'm telling you now, it's going to come back to haunt you, because what this really means at the end of the day is that this minister, this government doesn't understand that it's the people who are in charge of the government and not the other way around.

One final chance, Minister: It's all up to you. Will you withdraw 103?

Hon Mr Leach: To be direct, I guess, no, I won't withdraw 103. Bill 103 is a bill that's going to improve conditions in Metropolitan Toronto and for all of the 2.4 million people who live in this community.

What are we talking about here? At the present time, the majority of the funding goes to the upper tier. Most of the services that are presently provided to the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto are already amalgamated. We're talking about the remaining 28% of funding being moved to a single tier. The vast majority of people in this area — they said 400,000 voted against it; that leaves about two million that didn't.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: It's that kind of attitude that makes us look forward to the next election.

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My next question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. This weekend the Toronto Star ran a very disturbing exposé outlining some of the brutal conditions faced by too many children growing up in our province. We saw stories of children who face vicious cycles of neglect, physical abuse and even death at the hands of their own parents or at the hands of guardians who are supposed to protect them. A lot of the public learned for the very first time about the deplorable conditions in which some of Ontario's kids are being raised, but none of this is new to you.

I'm asking you to put children at the top of your agenda. I'm asking you personally to take responsibility and I'm asking you in particular to declare a state of emergency for Ontario's children. I want you to commit to emergency measures that will begin to put an end to these horror stories. Minister, will you do that?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): To the honourable member, thank you very much for the question. This is indeed a very import-

ant, very controversial, very sensitive issue. I think anybody who has read those stories in the Star or has read the reports from the coroner's task force cannot help but be shocked and appalled and very alarmed about what we need to do to improve the system.

That's one of the reasons why last spring we undertook to review all the safeguards in place for children. It's one of the reasons why we were quite prepared to support and participate with the coroner and the Association of Children's Aid Societies in the task force, so that we could come up with recommendations and information about how to improve the system. That's why we've undertaken to bring in a new computer system, a new database, so that children are not falling through the cracks. It's also one of the reasons why we think we need to improve the training, and we've begun work to do that as well. There are a number of issues that we have undertaken to pursue this very important issue.

Mr McGuinty: The single most important thing that you have done in your capacity as the Minister of Community and Social Services is you have cut funding to the children's aid societies to the tune of some \$17 million. The problem, of course, is that the damndest thing about kids is they don't know how to get their act together. They don't write us, they don't lobby us, they don't organize bus convoys, they don't put together placards, they don't protest. That's why, Minister, you above everybody else in this Legislature has a special responsibility to bring those concerns forward. Nobody wants to hear of any more stories about kids with broken bones, fractured skulls, cigarette burns and shattered spirits. Nobody wants to hear that kind of stuff any more. You tell me right now: How much longer do you think Ontario's kids are going to have to wait until you take some real action on their behalf?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, perhaps the honourable member needs cards and letters from children in order to exercise the responsibility, but we certainly do not. For example, last week the Premier, with the support of the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health and myself, announced spending of almost \$45 million. That \$45 million is going to the kind of intervention and prevention programs that start to identify these problems early. We know we have to do a better job in the system. We know the staff people need better training, we know they need better support. But if the honourable member would also pay attention to some of the information that's been put forward by the coroner's task force, he would recognize that simply throwing money at this problem will not solve it. What we need is better training, what we need is better information. There are a number of things that are happening. That's why we are working with the task force to put those steps in place.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why are you cutting the CAS?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): You're cutting the CAS.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Hamilton East and Kingston and The Islands, I ask you to come to order.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you may not want to hear this, but the fact of the matter is, it's going to take some money. Painful as that very concept may be to you, and

perhaps even foreign to you, it's going to take some money to help these kids, and I for one am not about to apologize for those kinds of expenditures.

In a couple of weeks' time, the Minister of Finance is going to tell us that he's going to benefit us with another part of a tax cut bonus to the tune of \$1.25 billion. You had to cut \$20 million from the children's aid societies' budget, but you're going to give us all another \$1.25 billion so that at the end of the day we'll have \$5 billion and we can bank a bit more.

You'd better stand up in this House right now and assure all of us that kids are first and foremost on your agenda, that when the cabinet meets, you're in there, you're fighting for Ontario's kids, because nobody else is. Stand up and tell me that right now.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member can try and turn this into a partisan issue if he wishes, but I don't think that's the appropriate way to deal with this issue. Even the children's aid society has acknowledged —

Interjections.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Where were you then, Dalton?

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Guzzo: I apologize.

The Speaker: I thank you for your apology. Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I might draw to the attention of the honourable member that we are spending \$350 million on child welfare in this province, that one of the reasons under the Who Does What initiatives that we decided to undertake the full funding for children's aid societies was so that we would be able to work with those children's aid societies to improve the services for these children. We've also put out \$800,000 for better training for the workers who are out there on the front lines, who are trying so hard to make those decisions.

Interjections.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Blame the workers. You are doing it.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hear the honourable members over there trying to say that somehow or other we're blaming the workers. I really wish they would stop this, because those individuals out there need their support. They're trying to play politics with this again instead of trying to work with us, with the agencies, with Ottawa. Tell Ottawa to get the national child benefit in place sooner. That's one of the other things we're working on, because we do take this issue extremely seriously, sir.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today your government wants to ram through Bill 103. In the process, you'll rob 2.4 million people of their local government, you'll rob them of control over their own communities, and you will have ignored the fact that 76% of the people of Metropolitan Toronto voted against your bill in a referendum.

Minister, you're acting more like a general in a South American junta than like a leader in a democracy. You've got one last chance. Say that you'll withdraw Bill 103 today. Do the democratic thing.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Again I will say that what we're giving to the people of Metropolitan Toronto is better government. By getting rid of the confusing two layers people will finally know who to call. They'll have one local elected representative they'll be able to talk to about all the important issues they have to deal with. They'll no longer have to put up with all the waste and duplication that goes on by having seven planning departments and six fire departments. All that will finally be resolved so that the people of this area, the people of Toronto, the people of the GTA and the people of Ontario, will finally have an area in Metropolitan Toronto that works well, once and for all. 1420

Mr Hampton: I'll try again. Minister, even your own MPPs don't believe you. The member for Grey-Owen Sound has said publicly that 70% of your Toronto caucus would vote against you if it were a secret ballot. When the referendum was held you couldn't get any of your own party's supporters to come out and support your position. You've got members of your caucus calling the Premier a dictator because of some of the positions he's taken on this. They don't believe your nonsense about Bill 103. Minister, you've still got a chance to show that you have some respect for democracy, that you have some respect for the will of the people. Will you show that today? Withdraw this bill. Show some respect for democracy.

Hon Mr Leach: The leader of the third party talks about democracy. Two weeks ago we offered them two more weeks of meaningful debate on this issue, that we would go back to committee for two weeks so they could have more input and make more suggestions. What did they decide to do? They decided to take nine days and waste it on reading silly resolutions with which the only thing different was the name. They talk about democracy. You should be ashamed of yourself. You had an opportunity to get more input into this bill and what did you choose? You chose nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Minister, let me tell you, we're pretty proud of what we've managed to do in this House. We know that at the end of the day you can insist on passing your megacity bill and ramming this through the legislature. We saw no usefulness in two weeks more of debate so that we could hear you talking about why you've listened and made no changes whatsoever on the essential point people said to you, Minister, that they didn't want the megacity.

People said no and you've continued to ignore them, but as bad as that is, your megacity plan, we know, is also going to cost municipal taxpayers plenty. Metro Toronto says your mega download will cost taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto over \$500 million. Now you've tried to fiddle with the numbers, you've pulled together people around you to try and fix those numbers, but even they aren't buying your numbers.

Minister, before you ram through your megacity bill, will you at least have the decency to level with the people of Metro Toronto and tell them what your download is going to cost them?

Hon Mr Leach: I am very happy to talk to the people of Ontario and mention the cost savings that will occur. We estimate we'll save about \$865 million in the first three years and \$300 million every year thereafter. As far as a cost-saving exercise is concerned, it will save a lot of money, but even better than that, it's going to get rid of the waste and duplication and the confusion in the various levels of government we have now.

The member said he's very proud of how they wasted the time of this House over the past few weeks, that it was one of their best accomplishments. Well, for that party it probably was one of their best accomplishments. With the kind of record they have of putting this province \$100 billion into debt and having interest payments of \$9 billion a year, they have the nerve to talk about cost savings.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Minister of Education and Training: Minister, over the past few days you've been busy holding press conferences trying to convince people across this province that your Bill 104 isn't about setting the stage for more cuts to education, but nobody believes you because you've already broken your promise not to cut funding to classroom education.

Recently in a visit to a high school in Waterloo we were given this textbook. It's a high school poetry anthology. It's used fairly widely in high schools across the province. What's interesting about this book is that it's falling apart. It came in about three parts. It's held together by an elastic band. That's the state of things in Waterloo high schools. When we asked the board about buying new ones, they said they don't have the money. Minister, can you tell us how Bill 104 is going to help give these students new textbooks that aren't held together by elastics?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I echo my colleague's views on the use of the time of this House during the committee of the whole proceedings, but I acknowledge the fact that the leader of the third party was in the chamber during that process. Whether he's proud or not proud of it, at least he was here, in stark contrast to the Leader of the Opposition.

In direct response to your question, I believe that Bill 104 will help us begin to build a new and improved education system in this province, one that —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With that remark I'm just wondering whether he could tell us if the Premier was at the Masters for the final vote.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): No, that's not a point of order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe the leader of the third party was here while his amendments were being read.

Bill 104 will do much to improve the system of education as a building block; we build on the foundation of what's right in our education system. We're going to reduce the amount of money we gave to spend on bureaucracy and on politicians in our education system. It will allow us to focus our resources on the classroom, on the materials and teacher supports and things that

make a difference with our students. That's clearly the premise of these improvements. That's clearly the direction of this government.

Mr Hampton: A very interesting answer. The Minister of Education continues to talk about how he's going to take money out of the school boardroom and put it in the classroom.

We've had a look at the minister's own paper that talks about the fact that he believes you can get \$150 million by collapsing the number of school boards. He says that's going to be the savings. But when you look at the details of the savings, what do they show? They show that \$9.9 million of the savings are going to come out of classroom supplies and equipment. In other words, they're going to come out of things like textbooks. Can you explain this, Minister: How can you plan to save almost \$10 million on supplies and equipment when students are using textbooks like this, that come in three parts? It doesn't add up: \$150 million, yet you're planning to take some out of textbooks. How are you going to do that?

Hon Mr Snobelen: This may be difficult for the leader of the third party to understand, but the outside consultants who have had a look at our plans to restructure, who say there are significant savings available, have identified the fact that when you put together a larger purchasing unit, you can purchase more school books for less money. That may be difficult for the leader of the third party to understand, because it's hard for him to understand that spending \$2.5 million on a filibuster is 100,000 new textbooks for classrooms, and the leader of the third party has just wasted that money.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I guess that number is about the same amount it took the Premier to renovate his new office over in the Whitney Block.

The minister is referring to this Ernst and Young report that was done. Keeping in mind that Ernst and Young themselves said they weren't sure they could stand by the figures, they said that out of the \$150 million, \$9.9 million was coming from classroom supplies. At the press conference this morning, the minister could not even commit that the \$150 million referred to in this report, that he keeps repeating, would actually go back into the classroom. Also, he admitted that the transition costs in amalgamating boards would increase costs, at least in the short term, and he didn't give any indication where that money was going to come from. Surely that money is going to come out of the \$13.6 billion spent annually in Ontario on education. In other words, classroom education is going to suffer even more.

Are you going to commit to give transition funding, at least, so you can protect classroom funding?

1430

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm glad the member for Algoma is paying attention to the press conferences; perhaps now some of his criticisms might be more accurate. Yes, the report did suggest that savings could be had by purchasing more classroom supplies for less money by having a larger network of purchasing. That's called purchasing power, and there were some suggestions that would happen so we can improve the classroom.

Bill 104 is clearly designed to reduce the amount of money that's spent on bureaucracy, reduce the number of politicians involved in education in Ontario and focus our resources on the classroom. We'd like to get on about the business of making that transition, about improving the education system. We'd like to answer the questions about the transition costs and lay out a plan for it. We cannot do that until Bill 104 is passed, so I would ask the member for Algoma to quit delaying passage of this bill. Let's get on with improving the system.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question too is for the Minister of Education. Again this morning you refused to give a guarantee that there would not be further cuts to education once your new school boards are in place and you are in complete control. Once again this morning you refused to acknowledge the cuts that you have already made and that you are going to make.

You keep playing word games, trying to make people believe that you're going to give school boards something you call stable funding. Your idea of stable funding for this year has meant \$250 million more cut from education, and now we are seeing more programs lost and more teachers laid off. Now you're talking about stable funding for the first six months of these new amalgamated boards, but those boards have to pay all the startup costs of that forced amalgamation in those six months, and the money for your amalgamation is going to come right out of the same budgets that pay for teachers, that pay for busing kids to school, that pay to provide textbooks.

Minister, this is a huge new cut, and I ask you, why are you making students pay the price of pushing your agenda through?

Hon Mr Snobelen: That is simply untrue. We made an announcement yesterday that said that school boards will be able to make the transition during the 1997-98 school year without affecting the programs that are offered students, because we do not want this transition period to cause any disruption in the classrooms in Ontario. Because of our announcement yesterday, we can assure parents and teachers and, most important, students that this will be the case: There will be a stable funding base for 1997-98; all of the programs will be offered. That's the commitment of this government.

Mrs McLeod: It's hard for me to determine what the minister defines as "truth," because the only thing that counts as truth is what is borne out by the facts. The facts are, according to this minister's own written statements, that school boards will have to pay all the startup costs for amalgamation and there will be no further funding. That means stable funding is actually a cut. The minister doesn't want to acknowledge that. He doesn't know what the figures are. He doesn't want to know, because then he'd have to acknowledge that he is going to hurt students with his amalgamation.

Let me ask you a very specific question, Minister, so I can get your sense of what this amalgamation is going to mean to kids in the classroom. Let me just take as an example two boards that are going to come into a multiboard amalgamation. One of the boards, because of your cuts last year, had to decide to drop its French immersion program so it could keep junior kindergarten.

The other board made a different decision; they decided that they would keep French immersion but they didn't have enough money left after your cuts to keep junior kindergarten. Minister, I want to ask you, under the amalgamated boards, are you going to fund both the junior kindergarten and the French immersion program for all the kids in the new amalgamated board or which program will you —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Surely the member opposite is not suggesting that you would somehow change the program offering midyear. That's the whole purpose of our announcement, to provide stability for the programs that are offered for the students.

When you talk about trust, in the red book you committed to reducing the number of trustees; you committed to reducing trustees' salaries; you wanted to recognize the part-time nature of a trustee's job; you committed to getting the province's education dollars spent in the classroom. Those were the things you said during the election campaign in this province, yet you've criticized this government's efforts to make those a reality. Which way is it, this way or that way, yesterday or tomorrow? You keep flip-flopping on this, and I can tell you the people of Ontario know who to trust to get a better education system. It's this government.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I was disturbed by some elements of your answer earlier with respect to children's services and child welfare.

I want to review with you your government's record with respect to children. We hear a lot about how much you care, but let's take a look at the announcement you made last week for about \$45 million in children's services: important services, but it was a reannouncement of \$45 million that you first announced in last year's budget. We're a week away from fiscal year-end. You didn't spend a cent. You also announced in last year's budget 40 million new dollars for child care spaces in this province. You said you were going to spend more than any government ever had. You haven't spent one penny of that. In fact, you cut another \$50 million of capital out and many thousands of child care spaces have disappeared. You've taken money out of CAS programs, where we know high-risk children are getting services. We have to improve them. You've talked about that; I would support you in that. But you've taken money out of those programs.

The bottom line is that you're balancing the budget and giving a tax break on the backs of kids. Why won't you commit those unspent dollars today to intervene in the CASs to give them the money they need?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): There's no question that the announcement we did last week talked about the budget commitment for speech and language, which was a budget commitment we are proceeding with. Secondly, the healthy babies initiative was also a budget commitment.

I'd like to remind the honourable member that the investment we have given to the Invest in Kids Foundation, which focuses on prevention and intervention work for young preschool children, was a new investment.

Secondly, the announcement that we are continuing as a permanent program the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program I think is also new. There is a program where we have seen that with the right community supports, with the right programming in high-risk communities, we can have a very dramatic impact on the number of children who need the care of children's aid or any other kind of intervention procedures.

So I think we have indeed moved forward and will continue to move forward. For example, the national child benefit: I was at a meeting again last week with my colleagues to see how we could improve services for low-income children.

Ms Lankin: Minister, your Invest in Kids amount was a very small amount of money to an agency that didn't even request money from you when you've got CASs where the workers' caseloads are growing daily. There are more poor kids in this province; there are more families at risk and families who need help. You can see how critical this is when you see the results if we don't have the system working well.

I admit to you and I agree with you that the system has needed work for a long time, but right now we're facing a crisis in terms of these kids. You've got to step in. There's over \$150 million unspent from last year's budget that you allocated to kids. Surely you could proceed and allocate moneys to needed child care spaces, where families are desperately needing that in order to get the relief they need or to get out and get work. Surely you could restore the \$17 million to CASs so they could bring down the caseload. Surely you could ensure that an investigation is being done of children's services across all the community and not just CASs. Minister, you've got to take responsibility. Please tell us you're going to act today.

1440

Hon Mrs Ecker: Forgive me, but I thought one of the things I was talking about was the things that we had already done or are doing. I do believe we are taking responsibility for this, as are the children's aid societies, and we look forward to working with them on the coroner's task force when they complete their recommendations. We've already begun some of the work to do that.

Yes, the families need help, and I'm pleased that the honourable member recognizes that, but it's not a question of simply throwing more money at the problem. Yes, resources are very important, but the other important question, the other thing the experts recommend to us, is how we're spending that money. Are we spending it on intervention and prevention? Yes, we are shifting to that. Are we providing more supports for the workers? Yes, we are. Those are the kinds of things that will make sure we're doing a better job for these children who need our support and care.

CARDIAC SURGERY

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Health. In my riding of Hamilton West,

the single biggest issue that's been raised through my office has been the issue of health care, in particular cardiac surgery. We have heard of some of the reinvestments your ministry has made in patient dollars saved through reinvestment. In light of those recent announcements, can you tell me and the people in my riding in what areas we can expect to see improved cardiac services?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Thank you to the member for Hamilton West. Hamilton, in the recent announcements I was able to make there on behalf of the government with respect to cardiac care, with respect to dialysis services, trauma services and transplant services, is an excellent example of the benefits that come from restructuring, getting rid of the waste and duplication in the health care system and investing every dollar, and more, back into services.

I was in Hamilton recently to announce \$7.3 million in hospital priority programs, and that falls on top of \$2 million in cardiac services in Hamilton just late in 1996. By this time next year, with those investments in Hamilton and with the \$35-million unprecedented reinvestment in cardiac care in this province, we will have the shortest waiting lists in the history of this province by this time next year in cardiac care. That's because we've not cut one penny in health care. In fact, we're spending \$300 million more in health care and we're shortening the waiting list to an all-time low —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Mrs Ross: Minister, what does this mean in terms of reinvestment in my community of Hamilton West? What does this mean in terms of patient care that we can expect there?

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order. The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): She's not coming back anyway.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order. I'm not warning you again.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Pucker up, guys. Here comes the Premier.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold as well.

Hon Mr Wilson: The people of Hamilton were very appreciative, and so were the cardiac surgeons and so were the people who put in new hips and knees and the surgeons who look after trauma patients. Dialysis services are available today that weren't available a year ago in Hamilton. All of that is a credit to the honourable member, because she understands health care, she understands that we're putting every dollar and more back into the system.

At the end of the day what it means to your constituents, I say to the member for Hamilton West, and all constituents across Ontario is that there will be modern hospitals with more services; no more half-empty buildings, no more huge administrations, but modern, full-service hospitals, with the newest technologies and the newest drug therapies and the shortest waiting lists in the history of health care in this province. That's what restructuring is all about and that's what the reinvestment

strategy is all about. I know that the doctors and nurses I met in Hamilton when I was down there recently understand that fully, and the patients were very grateful to have shorter waiting lists and a greater access to a range of hospital services.

The Speaker: New question, the member for Hamilton East.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It's unfortunate the minister didn't speak about hospital closures in Hamilton.

The Speaker: I still need to know who your question is to.

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the minister of privatization. The government's obsession with privatizing absolutely everything that moves in this province, absolutely anything that is essential, has now carried on to your next goal, and that is privatizing drinking water in this province. It started under Bill 26, when you took away the right of referendums from municipalities that choose to privatize their drinking water. It then continued through your massive downloading and dumping on municipalities. Now, Bill 107 is the final step, where you've turned the rest of the assets over to municipalities to allow them to privatize drinking water.

Very clearly, we have seen the experiences throughout the world. We have seen the British experience of an increase of 1,000% in rates, the health care difficulties. They turned off the people's water when they couldn't pay, and we are moving in that direction as a result of Bill 107.

Minister, can you tell the House why you believe it is appropriate for municipalities to have the power to sell their water and sewer assets to the highest bidder?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I think the honourable member across the floor will know that if he looks at the bill he's speaking to, that question is better addressed to the Minister of Environment. But in his absence, I will tell you that the assets we're dealing with in that particular bill were actually owned by the municipalities anyhow, and we're just doing what would have been done over the course of time anyhow.

As it relates to privatization, of course the member knows that we've been working over the last number of months to try to establish a framework so we can move ahead on privatization in a fair and open environment. In fact, we hope to be able to come forward with that framework shortly to deal with matters of privatization in the way they should be dealt with.

Mr Agostino: I'm astonished at the lack of knowledge of this issue since it clearly is going to fall under the jurisdiction that you have responsibility for once municipalities start moving to privatize their water services because of the fact that you have downloaded so much on to them that is the only asset they have. Frankly, the private sector would love to get its hands on and be able to control the water rates.

Very clearly, it's not a question of moving the other 25% of the services to the municipalities. This is an issue about your government having the responsibility and the power to very clearly say to municipalities across Ontario: "We're not going to allow you to privatize drinking water. It is not for sale to the highest bidder. It is a vital service to Ontarians."

Minister, we are going to introduce an amendment to Bill 107 that would prohibit municipalities from privatizing and losing control of the ability to set rates for water and sewer services. Can you tell us if you and your government are going to support that amendment that would stop municipalities from selling off their water to the highest bidder and in the process shafting homeowners and residents of this province and holding them hostage to corporate greed rather than —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The minister without portfolio responsible for privatization.

Hon Mr Sampson: What I can tell the member across the floor is that we intend to set up a framework that will deal with privatization matters on a fair and open basis so that all the issues related to privatization can be discussed, all the options associated with privatization can be discussed and the range of opportunities and options around asset sale or partnership or whatever can be discussed in a full and open environment. We intend to have that full and open discussion.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Attorney General. During the fall of last year, Attorney General, after you laid off almost 290 family support plan staff and shut down eight of the regional offices, day after day you told this House that your mega-office in Downsview was up and operating. It was only on November 7, when Shelley Martel and I brought back videotape, that your incompetence was revealed and it was demonstrated that the office was nowhere near operational and that's why women and kids weren't getting the money you were responsible for delivering to them.

You then brought forward Bill 82, and after a mere four days of hearings it was passed before Christmas 1996. You promised that the new enforcement procedures in Bill 82 would be proclaimed by January. It's now April, and women and children are still going without their family support payments. Why did you break that promise other than for your sole incompetence and inability to run your ministry and the family support plan?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We have passed a bill that will bring in what I believe are the toughest enforcement measures anywhere in North America to collect family support payments. We have worked very hard to bring service improvements to the plan so that 95% of cheques are processed within 48 hours, and we will continue to focus on service.

In addition, we're doing something different with the family support plan, and that is that we are changing the focus from cheque processing to enforcement. We are going to develop an enforcement agency and that will

effectively change the way this plan operates. Rather than the passive approach that has always been taken in the past to collect family support payments, we have implemented in this bill 30 new techniques that provide active enforcement, something that never existed in any plan in this province before.

We're now working very hard to ensure that the tools are implemented so that we can bring in our enforcement mechanisms in the most effective way.

1450

Mr Kormos: Attorney General, your singular incompetence rears its ugly head once again. The fact is that only 50% of the 2,000 phone calls a day are being answered. The fact is that hundreds and thousands of families in this province, women and their kids, still aren't receiving moneys that you're responsible to deliver to them, and the fact is that you promised that this bill would be proclaimed by January. It's now April. You can't even give a commitment as to when it will be proclaimed. You can't even give a commitment as to when the most basic enforcement tools that were contained in Bill 82 will be in effect so that you can start utilizing them.

You're an embarrassment. You express nothing but disdain for the women and children of this province. You ought to do the right thing and confess your incompetence, acknowledge it, resign. Let somebody else, if there is anybody else in that miserable caucus, take over your responsibilities.

Hon Mr Harnick: At least I wasn't dumb enough to be a Sunshine Boy.

I am surprised about the member's question, because in 1993, when these enforcement measures were sought by a mother —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: I am surprised that the member is pressing on this issue so hard, because in 1993 when —

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): You're incompetent.

The Speaker: The member for Sudbury East come to order. I'm warning you to come to order.

Hon Mr Harnick: In 1993, when Mothers Against Fathers In Arrears sought this kind of bill, they were turned away by the NDP government. When we were debating Bill 82, the opposition NDP brought an opposition day to stop the bill altogether, and now they want this bill. I can assure them that we are working very hard to implement the bill in a way that will be most effective, that will provide a new dimension to the family support plan, which for the first time will have an enforcement branch to it that will effectively be able to actively pursue arrears, something the NDP government rejected, took no steps to develop. We are doing this so that women and children can get the money to which they are entitled. Enforcement mechanisms have not existed to permit the plan to do that. They will exist very shortly.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Serving notice upon this incompetent minister, the one who bungled and breaks promises —

The Speaker: If you want to serve notice, you better do it in the proper manner.

Mr Kormos: — upon the Attorney General that he or his parliamentary assistant, whoever it happens to be today, is going to have to come back at 6, because that answer isn't adequate.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, two years ago we campaigned on the premise of less government regulation and a return to more self-reliance. In the 1996 business plan of your ministry and subsequently the passing of Bill 54, the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act of June of last year, the government outlined an initiative to move towards self-management for a number of business sectors regulated by your ministry.

I have a number of constituents who fall into this sector and will be affected by the legislation. I was wondering what the status of this initiative is and when they can expect changes to be in place. Could you inform the Legislature as to the progress you are making towards implementing self-management by real estate brokers and agents, travel agents and wholesalers, and automobile dealers?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): As the member knows, we outlined our intentions in Bill 54 to delegate certain responsibilities for the administration, enforcement and licensing of certain industries to non-profit, independent, private-sector organizations. I'd like to advise that we have made a fair amount of progress in our efforts in industry self-management.

As the member is aware right now, the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council, OMVIC, is now up and running. We then proceeded to work on the real estate council as well. I had an opportunity to first speak about this real estate council to members of the greater Hamilton real estate board, which was attended as well by the member for Hamilton West, whom I'd like to welcome as my new parliamentary assistant, Lillian Ross, at the same time, and also thank the member for Durham Centre for the work he did as parliamentary assistant to the ministry. We then signed the agreement with the Real Estate Council of Ontario on March 1.

I'd like to refer to a certain remark by Alan Silverstein, who is a well-respected lawyer and Toronto Star columnist who had this to say. He said, "Never before" —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'm afraid you'll have to do it in the supplementary.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you very much, Minister. On the flip side of the issue, some of my Halton North constituents have commented to me that in turning over these responsibilities to the private sector, consumer protection will be put at risk. Can you tell the House what protection will be in place to assist the consumers of Ontario and address the concerns of my constituents?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Mr Speaker, I will finish that thought at the request of the member from over there. Mr

Silverstein did indicate: "Never before have business and consumers had an opportunity for greater input. If anything," the industry "should be concerned that its activities will now be subject to greater public scrutiny, higher levels of competence and ethical conduct, and tougher sanctions."

Mr Speaker, we are embarking upon self-management, not self-regulation. What this means is that certain functions that the ministry used to do will be handled by the industry, such as administration and some licensing functions. We will still maintain the policy and regulatory functions for the ministry. We'll be responsible for monitoring.

Certainly this has worked in other provinces. Other provinces which have raised the bar in terms of standards for the industry are Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and Saskatchewan.

We will maintain the consumer protection. We will have consumer representatives on all these councils. We will have government representatives as well just to make sure the consumer is protected.

1500

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The minister will know that on March 25, the town council at Jaffray Melick passed a resolution to reject the 41.5 kilometres of highway that the minister has attempted to download on them. Minister, you will know that many other municipal leaders along with Mayor Canfield have stated that they and their councils are unwilling to accept these highways. The minister will also know that the mayor and council went out and covered the signs that announced the transfer of highways to the motorists in black plastic.

Now that the town has refused your downloading, I want to ask you, who is responsible for the safety of the motoring public and also the maintenance of these highways?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to inform the honourable member that these highways have been transferred to the local municipality, and they are the ones who are going to be responsible for the upkeep of safety. I do expect that municipalities will maintain safety on their new provincial roads.

Mr Miclash: They've rejected taking on these highways; they're not taking them. They've told you they don't want them. We know that many of these mayors and councillors are very dedicated. They are dedicated leaders and they're trying to protect their municipalities, municipalities that are having enough of a tough time maintaining the roads they now have.

Mayor Canfield and his colleagues are asking the question on the minds of other municipal leaders across the north, that being, does the province have the right to bankrupt their municipality? Minister, again, these municipalities have said they do not want these highways. They have rejected them. I ask you, what do you say to Mayor Canfield and others who fear the worst and have told you they will not accept these highways?

Hon Mr Palladini: The highways that have been earmarked and transferred to the municipalities have been done. As of April 1, they're going to be responsible. But I also want to say to the member that the municipalities are going to control the land use and the zoning and they will also have control on the entries and building permits that possibly are going to be erected from this particular point. I also want to say that municipalities are going to have an excellent opportunity to increase local development with these transfers, so there are positives in what has been going on.

I must say, these highways have been transferred in the best of condition, and if there are some situations where they have to be addressed, there are funds available to make sure that these transfers are going to be done in an orderly fashion.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): A question to the Minister of Finance. Minister, we've just finished two weeks of public hearings on your Bill 106, that of reassessment Ontario. These are some of the impacts of your bill. Bill 106 demands a complete reassessment of some 3.8 million properties across Ontario, with a possible 900,000 appeals. Bill 106, the same bill, will involve a massive tax shift whereby the big banks, the big conglomerates, will save some 40% of their business occupancy tax and the slack will be picked up by those smaller businesses. Homeowners and tenants in Metro Toronto will be subjected to a massive increase. Rural municipalities will have to assume a new responsibility, that of the farm tax rebate — all this in a one-year tax frame.

Tell the House, Minister, what's your rush? What's the big hurry?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The honourable member will know that the system of property taxation and assessment we have in Ontario today is very unfair and unequal across the province. We have some people being taxed on 1940 values and we have other people being taxed on 1992 values.

I say to the honourable member, he's making an assumption. If he thinks that municipalities are going to pass on what is now the business occupancy tax to residential homeowners, I think he's making a very serious mistake indeed. There is no need for municipalities to pass that on to residential homeowners. As a matter of fact, municipalities will now have six classes of properties. They can take the entire revenue that they now gain on business occupancy tax and ask businesses to continue to pay it or they can distribute it as they see fit.

I might also point out that the city of Toronto alone loses over \$100 million a year because of an out-of-date property tax assessment.

Mr Pouliot: Minister, let's snap out of it. Let's get into the real world here. The devil is in the detail. The city of Oakville, for instance, will be asked to pass \$18 million of industrial assessment on to the commercial sector and to the residential sector.

The Premier and the Treasurer are very good at looking across the fence and saying, "You must streamline; you must get leaner; you will find those savings through efficiencies," and yet this is a government that is

spending more money this year than last year and more last year than the year before. You have no credibility. Why don't you start doing your own work instead of downloading on the smaller people, the municipalities, which is the last resort? You have no credibility. You are in a mess, with nine months for implementation. We don't want you to simmer in it. Why don't you come to your senses? Withdraw the bill or give it a little more time. Do what's right, Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: We are doing what's right. The reality is that there are thousands upon thousands of Ontario taxpayers who have been paying more than their share; some for decades have been paying more than their share. We are changing the system so that, for example, Metro Toronto won't lose \$100 million a year in lost revenue due to appeals. There are over 40,000 appeals currently pending in Ontario today. In municipalities all across this province right now there is over \$200 million in arrears under the business occupancy tax. It's an outdated tax that was started in 1904. It's totally unworkable, as well as inequitable.

After we are done with this process we'll have a far more equitable system across Ontario, where everybody knows they will be treated the same. If the honourable member, as indeed other members, has suggestions he'd like to see improvements to Bill 106, we're quite prepared to listen to them.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that we do now proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It'll be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1506 to 1536.

The Speaker: Order. Order, member for Hamilton Centre.

The government House leader has moved a motion to move to orders of the day.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CITY OF TORONTO ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Mr Leach moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to replace the seven existing municipal governments of Metropolitan Toronto by incorporating a new municipality to be known as the City of

Toronto / *Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à remplacer les sept administrations municipales existantes de la communauté urbaine de Toronto en constituant une nouvelle municipalité appelée la cité de Toronto.*

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Just to indicate up front, I understand there is unanimous consent that the opposition parties would be allocated about 50 minutes each and the government will take the remaining time beyond that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's okay if you want to do that; it's just unusual. Unanimous consent to 50 minutes each to the opposition parties and the government will take the remaining time? Agreed.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): This is a historic day for Torontonians, because today Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act, comes before this House for third reading.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members for Lake Nipigon and Sudbury East, I would ask that you come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has the floor. Member for Yorkview.

Hon Mr Leach: Historic because today we take the final steps towards unifying Metropolitan Toronto and its six area municipalities into one city of Toronto, and today the people who live and work in this region are one step closer to better government. They're one step closer to government that will result in lower costs, lower taxes, fewer politicians, better services and increased accountability. They're one step closer to a strong, globally competitive city of Toronto and they're one step closer to a future that includes jobs, prosperity, hope and progress.

Torontonians deserve a future that's built on optimism, a future dedicated to positive change and a future that says yes to new and exciting possibilities.

Certainly the road leading to today's vote has not been easy. Nobody ever said it would be easy; change is never easy. But we made the tough decisions to move ahead with this important legislation because we very sincerely believe the results will be well worth the effort. The new, unified city of Toronto is all about government that works.

There have been dozens of studies, each showing that the status quo was not an option. Even the six mayors agreed with that. The Who Does What panel recommended fixing the GTA core and so did the Golden task force. They recognized, as we recognize, that this is a great city but it simply cannot afford to sit back and rest on its laurels.

We knew we had to take action to maintain its international position as a vibrant and thriving metropolis. We knew action was necessary to deal with a global economy, new technology and new ways of doing business. So we got down to brass tacks and we introduced Bill 103 to galvanize this great city, to propel it into the 21st century and to ensure its rightful place on the cutting edge of prosperity and growth.

What's so important about creating a unified Toronto? Improved economic development potential: one city presented to business investors, not six cities competing

with the same prospects; one strong council and one mayor, not seven competing voices.

Better political accountability: Taxpayers won't have to deal with two levels of government, only one. Savings: Taxpayers can save up to \$865 million over three years and \$300 million every year thereafter.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Even your own civil servants don't believe that nonsense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Leader of the third party.

Hon Mr Leach: An end to duplication and waste: One fire department, not six; one roads department, not seven. Closing the loop on service amalgamation: Three quarters of the amount spent on city services is already amalgamated. Police, public transit, social and ambulance services are already consolidated. It's time to bring the final quarter on board.

Last, but not least, a solid GTA core, a strong centre to an area that is Ontario's economic engine: A unified Toronto will have the population, political representation and clout to ensure that the GTA and Ontario continue to thrive. In fact, I expect to receive the final report on recommendations for a Greater Toronto Services Board very shortly, and unifying Metro is the first and very logical step towards reform of this entire area.

These are the reasons we introduced Bill 103. We expected opposition, and we certainly got it, but we also knew that we would have support, and we got that as well. People voiced their opinions at committee hearings, town hall meetings, in letters and phone calls, through public opinion surveys and yes, even in referenda.

The government listened very closely. This input — the input from 600 deputations, from town hall meetings — helped us to understand how we can improve our legislation for the benefit of all of Toronto, and we responded. Our fundamental goal of one city of Toronto remained intact, but we introduced more than 30 amendments to our legislation, amendments that combined the benefits of unification with the strengths of local community representation.

Have we pleased everyone? Obviously not. We recognize there are naysayers out there who will be satisfied with nothing less than scrapping Bill 103 in its entirety, but for those looking for honest improvement, we believe we have come up with fair and workable solutions that address their concerns.

People said our initial proposal didn't give them enough local representation. We have increased the number of locally elected councillors to 56 within the current Metro ward boundaries.

People told us they were concerned about protecting and preserving their neighbourhoods, so we strengthened those provisions. There will be six community councils based on existing municipal boundaries.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): They're a joke. You admitted they're a joke yourself.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oakwood.

Hon Mr Leach: People were worried that the board of trustees was too powerful. We have replaced the board of trustees with a financial advisory board with limited powers.

People told us our proposed transition team placed too much power in the hands of unelected officials. Again, we listened. The transition team will now be an advisory and consultative body which will make recommendations to the new city council on how things might work.

People told us they were afraid a new, unified council would increase their taxes. We don't believe that's the case at all, so the transition team is going to prepare a 1998 draft budget for the new council's consideration. This budget will reflect the principles of tax stability and continuity of services.

We believe the new council, as duly elected officials, will work hard to find the efficiencies in the new, unified city that will allow it to once again avoid tax increases, and we believe it is only logical that moving from seven governments to one will produce savings.

Some citizens told us they felt their cities' reserve funds were open to grabs by the provincial government. The fact is, these reserve funds were never at the mercy of the province at any time. But again, we acknowledged this concern and introduced an amendment to our bill that clarified that the province will not be able to access municipal reserves.

These are the major amendments which we introduced and which have brought us to this point in Toronto's history. Bill 103 is now up for final debate. One strong city of Toronto is now on the horizon. This is a new day, a new beginning for all of us. But the work is just beginning, public consultations are just beginning and the transition will take time to complete. With the goodwill and the perseverance of everyone in this great city, one new and better Toronto will emerge for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): At one level this debate is about the structure of government for Metro Toronto, but at a deeper level it's about something else. It's about our vision for one of the greatest cities on the planet and it's about our values as a society. Before we vote on this bill, I think we should each ask ourselves three separate and distinct questions: First of all, is a megacity the right vision for Metro Toronto; second, do the people of Toronto really want a megacity; and third, what does the passage of this bill say about the Harris government and its view of democracy?

With respect to the first question, earlier this year a legislative committee held six weeks of hearings on the megacity bill, six weeks of input that this government didn't want but was forced into by the opposition. We heard from expert after expert, and their views were unanimous: A megacity is the wrong vision for Metro Toronto. The evidence is overwhelming and beyond dispute. A megacity will cause property taxes to soar, it will cause services to be cut and it will make government even more remote from the people it is supposed to serve.

We heard from Wendell Cox, an international public policy consultant who said: "This just makes no sense at all. I think in the long run megacity is going to be a failed experiment." Later on, Mr Cox told us that the megacity comes along with a \$4.5-billion pricetag for the next 10 years. That means a property tax hike of about \$5,000 per household over the next 10 years, and that's before the effects of downloading, which are going to

cost us another \$500 every year per household. Let's face it: Megacity and downloading are a one-two punch aimed at the very heart of Metropolitan Toronto.

We also heard from Jane Jacobs, the internationally renowned authority on cities, who has chosen to make Toronto her home for good reason, who said: "Amalgamation is the most stupid idea that's come along for ages.... If it ever happens, we'll just have to accept we're going to stagnate." We heard from expert after expert who said that bigger cities are not more efficient and cheaper; they are less efficient and more expensive.

1550

I remember when Mike Harris used to make the same point. I remember when he said: "I disagree with restructuring because it believes that bigger is better. Services always cost more in larger communities." That's what the then leader of the third party said. But that was then and this is now. Opposition leader Mike Harris used to speak out for strong local governments. Now, Premier Mike Harris kills them.

Next question: Do the people of Toronto really want a megacity? I think the answer to that one ought to be pretty apparent to all of us. Over the course of six weeks, we saw nearly 1,000 people who love this community — and I use that word advisedly. They love this community; there is a strong emotional bond with the communities in which the people of Metropolitan Toronto happen to live. We saw those 1,000 people testify at committee. We saw 10,000 people march down Yonge Street. We saw meetings night after night in municipality after municipality, from 15 to 15,000 people. I don't think this city has seen so many people so involved in an issue in nearly three decades. The message they sent was loud and very, very clear: "We don't want to be part of a megacity and we don't want you forcing a megacity on us."

We saw referenda in six municipalities, referenda that this government tried to derail, referenda that it said it would ignore and ultimately referenda that it tried to buy with a million-dollar advertising campaign. Yet when all was said and done and all the votes were counted, 76% of those who voted said no to the megacity.

It would seem to me that's pretty clear; in fact, I'd call it unequivocal. It ought to be unequivocal, and it is to everybody but this government. People said "No." They didn't say, "No, unless they make some token changes," and they didn't say, "No, unless they make some minor amendments." They said, "No." They said, "No means no," and they said, "No means no megacity." There was only one decent, honourable and responsive thing for this government to do: Kill the bill, put it out of its misery.

I remember the good old days when Mike Harris used to speak in favour of referenda. I remember when he said the government should listen to the people it serves. But that was then and this is now. Opposition leader Mike Harris used to listen to people. Premier Mike Harris runs roughshod over them.

The third question: What does the passage of this bill say about the Harris government and its view of democracy? The people of Metro Toronto have sent a clear and unequivocal message to this government. If this government insists on using its majority to force through Bill 103, it will send a clear and unequivocal message back to

the people. The Harris government is saying to the people of Metro Toronto: "We don't care what your vision of your community is. We don't care about your belief in strong local government. You're getting a megacity, and you're getting it whether you like it or not."

That kind of bullheadedness is of concern not only to the people of Metro but to people right across this great province, because if this government insists on forcing its will on the largest and most powerful community in this province, then surely it will not hesitate one instant to run roughshod over the smallest and the most powerless.

The contempt for public opinion that this government is showing today is nothing less than sledgehammer democracy at its very worst. A great deal has been said about this government's style of operation, but the member for Wentworth North perhaps captured it best. He said, and remember we're talking about a Conservative member here, "This government is controlled by the Premier's office in conjunction with a bunch of kids who I say have a college or university degree in one hand and Machiavelli's Prince in the other, and not a whole lot in between." He added, "And those are the people, for ideological reasons, that are coming up with this policy." That's what one of their own said.

I'm going to make an appeal now directly to the Conservative members opposite. When you cast your vote on this bill, you can send the Premier one of two messages. You can say it's okay for the Premier to run this province like it's his personal fiefdom; it's okay to ignore the wishes of the people of Ontario and the members they elect, even government members; it's okay for a small, unelected clique inside the Premier's office to force its will on the people. Or the members opposite can stand up for the people who voted for you and you can vote against this bill. You can send a loud and clear message that it's not okay for the Premier and a small group of ideologues in his office to ignore the people of Ontario and those they elected to represent them. It's not too late, in fact it's never too late, to stand up for real democracy instead of sledgehammer democracy. Even at this 11th hour, it's not too late.

That's why I'm tabling an amendment to this bill. It's called a reasoned amendment, which our rules allow even on third reading of a bill. It says, in part, that Bill 103 is fundamentally defective in principle, which every member of this House knows in their heart to be true, and that Bill 103 ought to be withdrawn, which every member of this House knows is the only action that is in keeping with the will of the people we happen to enjoy the privilege of serving.

It was over 200 years ago that one of the greatest students of democracy, somebody by the name of Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote, "Governments usually perish from impotence or from tyranny." In the case of this government, it is certainly risking both. In forcing through this bill, this government has lost a sense of the very real privilege of government, a sense that what we are really all about in this chamber is public service. Those who lose touch with this concept, who lose touch with the people we happen to serve, are a government that has lost the support of the people.

This government and this Premier can try to rule by imposing their will on the people, can choose a path quite different from the path of democracy, but they should not be surprised when the people respond decisively at election time. The people of Metropolitan Toronto will not just accept this vote and go quietly into the night and the people of Ontario will not forget what happens here today. If this government chooses to sow the wind, then it had better be prepared to reap the whirlwind.

I want to conclude by moving the following reasoned amendment:

That Bill 103, An Act to replace the seven existing municipal governments of Metropolitan Toronto by incorporating a new municipality to be known as the City of Toronto, be not now read a third time but be returned to the standing committee on general government to determine the following matters:

The amount of the shift in tax burden from provincial taxes to municipal residential, commercial and industrial property which is occurring as a result of the downloading and offloading of provincial costs on to the municipal tax base;

The impact of the offloading of the provincial costs on the taxes, services and the voice of communities across Metro. The government should present evidence to demonstrate how the legislation will reduce taxes in Metro and to show how services will be protected;

The implications of ignoring the Golden and Crombie task force recommendations to replace the five existing regional governments with a GTA-wide council or board made up of representatives from the municipalities within the GTA;

The implications of studies showing that once a city gets over one million people, economies of scale in municipal operations start to disappear. The government's own studies showing what savings are expected should also be presented at this time.

I now ask for unanimous consent for me to move this particular amendment and for us to have an opportunity for a vote.

1600

The Deputy Speaker: You have moved it; I have to read it.

Mr McGuinty has moved a reasoned amendment:

That Bill 103, An Act to replace the seven existing municipal governments of Metropolitan Toronto by incorporating a new municipality to be known as the City of Toronto, be not now read a third time but be returned to the standing committee on general government to determine the following matters:

The amount of the shift in tax burden from provincial taxes to municipal residential, commercial and industrial property which is occurring as a result of the downloading and offloading of provincial costs on to the municipal tax base;

The impact of the offloading of provincial costs on the taxes, services and the voice of communities across Metro. The government should present evidence to demonstrate how the legislation will reduce taxes in Metro and to show how services will be protected;

The implications of ignoring the Golden and Crombie task forces' recommendations to replace the five existing

regional governments with a GTA-wide council or board made up of representatives from the municipalities within the GTA;

The implications of studies showing that once a city gets over one million people economies of scale in municipal operations start to disappear. The government's own studies showing what savings are expected should also be presented at this time. April 17, 1997.

Further debate? The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Usually when we stand —

Mr McGuinty: Point of order: Do we have unanimous consent?

The Deputy Speaker: No unanimous consent required.

Mr Silipo: When we rise to speak we usually begin, many of us, with the words, "I'm pleased to rise and speak" to whatever the motion or the matter may be. I'm not particularly pleased to stand here today and to speak on third reading of Bill 103. I'm in fact quite angered at the fact that this is where we are in the proceedings of the House, but I'm not surprised. Even the reasoned amendment that we've just seen presented I know will find the same conclusion that in fact any other reasonable proposal that has come forward from any of us in the opposition and indeed, and particularly, members of the public will find, which is that the government will simply ignore it. They will ignore it because for them this is not about reason, this is not about doing the right thing, this is about doing the ideologically correct thing for them. This is doing the thing that controls and continues to put the control and the power into the hands of fewer and fewer people and takes that control more and more away from the citizens — in this case, the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto. That is what's driven this government on many of its actions and that's certainly what is driving this minister and this government on this particular action.

I could speak in the short time that I'm going to be speaking about all of the reasons why the government should, even at this late stage, pull back, pause, reflect, figure out a way to send this bill away, but I know that I would be simply repeating things that the government would not care to hear and things that quite frankly would not make a difference at all. So I would rather spend a few minutes talking about what this all means; not what this means so much in terms of the next stage in the implementation because, let me tell you, the debate is just beginning on that, but what this means in terms of what's happened through this whole process in terms of the understanding that's developed among the people, not just in Metropolitan Toronto — yes, in spades in Metropolitan Toronto — but indeed across the province about what this government is all about: the undemocratic nature that they have gone to, the undemocratic measures that they have used to ram through this bill, to ignore completely what the vast majority of residents in Metropolitan Toronto have said, not just through the hearings but through the referendum. Quite clearly people have begun to understand that. They know that if this government is prepared to go to these undemocratic means, is prepared to ignore so clearly an expressed view as that of 76% of the people in Metropolitan Toronto saying no to

the megacity in a referendum, that they will stop at nothing to implement their horrendous agenda.

I think, quite frankly, that there is at least a tremendous amount of value to what's happened in the last few months because I have seen a citizens' movement develop here in Metropolitan Toronto that I have not seen for some years. The minister can stand here, even upon third reading of the bill, and talk about, "We expected some opposition and we got it," or he can talk about, "Those people out there are naysayers." I want to say to the minister, take a look up in the galleries, on both sides, listen to the noise that you hear out there because that's the sound and these are the faces of the people that you are choosing to ignore. You will ignore them not just at your own political peril but you will ignore them and you will end up at the end losing on your revolution because people understand now what your Common Sense Revolution is all about.

They understand that it's not about more democracy, they understand that it's very much about less democracy. They understand that it's about concentrating more and more power in the hands of fewer and fewer people, in the hands of unelected people, unaccountable to the public. They understand that, Minister. You may get away with passing this bill on third reading today but if you think for one second that's the end of the matter, then you really haven't heard a thing out there, because in the courts this will continue to be fought, in the implementation this will continue to be fought. At every stage from here till the last day that you will stand up as Minister of Municipal Affairs to whoever will succeed you and to the last days of your government, there will continue to be opposition to this, not because we in the opposition have to muster that opposition but simply because what you are doing is fundamentally wrong and people understand that.

When people understand that what their government is doing is wrong and when they are prepared to continue to tell you that in all sorts of ways, then the opposition that's out there which has been tremendous up until this point will not wither away, it will grow. It will be expressed in different ways but it will grow. At the end of the day it will result in your government being defeated and it will result in the people being able to win the day. Why? Simply because they are right and you're wrong. It's as simple as that.

You can muck around with this bill as much as you want. You can make as many amendments as you want, but if you continue to persist, as you are obviously doing here today, in your insane approach that says that this megacity is the way to go, then you have either not heard, not understood, or you have heard and understood but chosen to ignore the will of the people. When any government acts contrary to the will of the people, the only thing that it has left is a little bit of time and that's the time between now and the next election. That's the only thing you have left. You have no credibility, you have no ability to convince people, even in some of the smaller measures that you might want to bring about, because people have seen through your façade. People have seen through the Common Sense Revolution. They

have seen it for the charade that it is and yet they understand the seriousness of it, because people have made the connection between the megacity, the mega school boards that are being created under Bill 104 and all of the other measures that particularly we are seeing in this special session of the Parliament which will result, all for the sake of the tax cut, in democratic power being taken away from the people and put more and more into the hands of fewer and fewer people. The minister can say, "We've increased the number of politicians." It's not about the numbers, Minister, it's about the process, it's about the link there is and it's about the decision-making power.

You can continue to ride this through. You presumably have the numbers this afternoon to pass this bill. But at the end of the day, the voice and the will of the people will ride over what this government is doing.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It always does.

Mr Silipo: It always does, as my colleague the member for Sault Ste Marie says, and it certainly will in this case.

So I stand today with a lot of sadness because we have not managed to convince this government that what it is doing is wrong, but I stand today also very firm in my mind that this is but another chapter in the ongoing fight against this ludicrous notion of a megacity that Mike Harris and Al Leach want to continue to impose upon the people of Metropolitan Toronto, despite the fact that the collective wisdom of the people has said no, will continue to say no and will persist in saying no until either Mike Harris and Al Leach listen, or quite frankly until Mike Harris and Al Leach are here no more and therefore it doesn't matter whether they listen or not. But the will of the people, at the end of the day, will have the day, because that's the way the democratic process is and should continue to be.

1610

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's my pleasure to rise on what is indeed an auspicious day as we give third reading and final consideration to a bill which will have a dramatic and positive impact on the people here in Metro Toronto.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Would the member for Scarborough East take his seat for a second, please. Could I ask the members in the gallery to please not make that hissing noise. It is against the rules here and I have to ask that you obey the rules when you're sitting in those seats, please. Thank you.

Mr Gilchrist: I know the leader of the second and third parties, Mr Sewell, is in attendance. Perhaps he can counsel his members to respect the rules here in the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough East, take your seat for a moment. I would ask the member for Oakwood to come to order. The member for Scarborough East, I don't think it's appropriate or indeed helpful to the situation to provoke members or insult members of the gallery either.

Mr Gilchrist: We'll stay on topic then, and the topic is indeed the fact that this —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think you appropriately cautioned the member, but I would suggest it is out of order to refer to members in the gallery and/or to refer to them by parliamentary names like "the leader of the second and third parties." I would suggest that the member for Scarborough East could facilitate this by simply withdrawing in a polite fashion instead of the arrogant display we've seen.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please. Member for Beaches-Woodbine, there was nothing out of order according to the rules of the House. If the member chooses to apologize to any members of the public, then that is his choice, and I offer him that opportunity.

Mr Gilchrist: I certainly didn't mean to offend anyone in the public if they took exception to who has been one of the more outspoken critics, because as we saw during the filibuster, at times when there were no members of the official opposition in attendance here, clearly if there were criticisms to this bill, they were better articulated outside this chamber sometimes than inside.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Scarborough East, take your seat.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: This member continues to basically insult and antagonize people. Will he withdraw his first comment?

The Acting Speaker: First of all, I would caution the member for Scarborough East to not be so provocative. I think you know what you're doing, and it would help matters all around in a difficult debate like this if you would not do that. Again, the member for Scarborough East has not used unparliamentary language. I again caution the member, however, and I'd ask all members as we debate this to try to not insult and provoke each other.

Mr Gilchrist: Certainly, the use of the facts I hope will never be inflammatory or cause any great concern, because the root of what we are about to conclude here was a bill that was introduced on December 17. At the outset, a statement was made categorically that there would be ample time given to public hearings. In fact, we gave 105 hours of consideration to this bill, one of the longest consideration periods before a legislative committee of any bill in the last 10 years. That was something outlined by the government the very day the bill was introduced. If the other side wants to deal with the mythology that their 48 somehow forced our 82 to do certain things, I'll leave that to the public to decide the math and the accuracy of that.

The bottom line is, in those hearings we did hear some very specific suggestions. People's concerns basically fell into three categories: They were concerned that somehow this bill would have an impact on the evolution of their community; they had a concern there might be an impact on the democratic representation being offered by the municipal politicians in their area; they had a concern that there might be an impact on taxation.

I am absolutely convinced, and I think any reasonable person reading the amendments we brought forward would conclude the same, that every one of those substantive and specific concerns was addressed directly in

the form of those amendments. We took out all the references that we thought were building in extra protection for taxpayers in this city, protection that would ensure that the trustees and the transition team would be allowed to do their work without frivolous and vexatious opposition and time wasting. We recognized this was an important initiative and that once people were charged with the task of going forward and making this project work, they had to have the flexibility to do that in an efficient and effective manner.

We heard certain criticisms about the fact that the bill would be retroactive; we took them out. We heard criticisms that the decisions of the trustees would be immune from any court prosecution; we took them out. In fact, we took out every single specific reference to what others considered undemocratic or anti-democratic actions. Every one of those sections was removed.

We heard too, on the subject of representation, that to go from 106 politicians down to 44 was too great a cut all at once. Interestingly enough, Metro council itself reduced back in 1988 by over 20% the number of members at Metro council, and many other communities across Ontario have seen dramatic reductions in the number of councillors, voluntarily initiated. Here in Metro we saw no grass-roots initiative on the part of the seven local governments to bring about that greater accountability, so that was something we had to do. But we heard concerns that 44 was too few. We reflected that by going up to 56.

I have to say at this point it is clear, to anyone who understands the Municipal Act and understands this bill, that effective the first day that new council is formed, the evolution of the city of Toronto government will be totally in the hands of those 57 politicians. All of their decisions in terms of future boundary changes, in fact whether they even keep 56 councillors and one mayor, those decisions will be made by the city government as they are made by city governments all across this province as a result of our Bill 86, passed last December, which gives those authorities specifically to the communities and removes their need to have to come cap in hand to Queen's Park. So we heard the criticisms about representation and we acted on them, I think very directly.

At the same time a majority of the people who criticized the bill in the legislative hearings said that they thought there was a need to reflect the traditional boundaries of the six existing cities. I think there were others who suggested that those were to some extent outdated and irrelevant and that we should have looked at something that more evenly distributed the workload of the community councils. But having said that, enough people made it clear to us that they thought there was value in respecting those old boundaries that we said the new community councils will in fact conform exactly, precisely, 100% to the boundaries of the existing six cities.

To the extent that the new councils and the new councillors decide to either preserve those boundaries or change in the future, that decision will be totally a made-in-Toronto decision. But at the outset, everyone who said East York is somehow different from York is somehow different from Etobicoke etc will have the ability through

their local councils, the community councils, to make sure those differences continue to be respected.

Of course, the third criticism was that there would be an impact on taxation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, one of the tasks of the transition team will be to prepare a budget that proves categorically that it is possible to maintain all existing services, even though those services may differ from one of the old communities to another.

1620

Interruption.

Mr Gilchrist: Perhaps you might have that person removed.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. I would caution members in the gallery again. I think you've been well informed even by the Speaker of the House, who attended a meeting at one time, about the rules of the House. You must remain quiet as you sit and listen to the debate. Thank you.

Mr Gilchrist: Clearly the transition team will be charged with the task of coming up with a budget that shows you can preserve all of the services as they exist right now, including the differences between North York's and Scarborough's snowplowing and all the other examples we heard about during these last few weeks, and maintain exactly the same tax. The mill rate need not change.

If the new council, after January 1, decides to take a different course and decides to build more subways or build more libraries or shut down a service or do any change, that will purely and simply be a decision they have made and in no way related to this bill itself, because one of our commitments was that we will be able to provide that proof, that nothing in Bill 103 will impact the taxation of the property owners in the new city of Toronto.

The process has worked and it has worked extraordinarily well. As every member opposite knows and as they themselves practised during their respective five-year terms of office over the last decade, bills that are introduced in this chamber, the thousands of pieces of legislation that have come through this House, are carried out in a particular format. We have first reading, which is nothing more than reading the title of the bill. We have second reading, where quite frankly the three parties just put on record their respective positions. Then the real work takes place of listening to the public. We did that: 105 hours of hearings.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Scarborough North, come to order.

Mr Gilchrist: We also attended the town hall meetings. In fact every member of the government of Toronto hosted their own town hall meeting at least once. The bottom line is, you add to that all the letters and phone calls and faxes we received, and I know this may be a great shock to the members opposite, but in my riding a majority of the people who came to the town hall meetings, a majority of the people who wrote and phoned and faxed, support this bill.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): They ran you out of your town hall.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order.

Mr Gilchrist: The fact of the matter is, in my home community of Scarborough right now, despite the fact that we had three months of the press absolutely suggesting that the world was going to come to an end, absolutely suggesting that this bill was some terrible, draconian instrument that was going to be the death of all our communities, 81.2% of all the people in Scarborough weren't concerned enough to mail back a ballot. That's how concerned the people in my riding were about this bill. The suggestion that 16% of the people in Scarborough voted no, 16% of the eligible voters —

Mrs Papatello: How many votes elected you, member? A lot of those votes put you in that seat.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order.

Mr Gilchrist: Math class may have been a long time ago, but 82 is still bigger than 16%. To suggest that the 74% of the people across Metro who didn't have enough concern to even vote, in the case of North York to pick up their phone and take two minutes, the suggestion that somehow they are the only people who should be listened to, and the other 74%, or in the case of Scarborough the other 81%, don't have a right to be heard and their views are not to be factored in by the members sitting in this chamber I think is preposterous.

Obviously there is no precedent. Nobody over there ever took direction in the form of a bill from a referendum in a local community. No one over there during their term of office —

Ms Lankin: You want the people to believe in this process.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Mr Gilchrist: — none of them had the courage to do what they're suggesting we do today.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine and Sudbury East, please.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): You are the one with the referendum bill, you clown. Give your head a shake.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Sudbury East, come to order.

Mr Gilchrist: I didn't realize "clown" was parliamentary in your eyes, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, take your seat for a moment. I did not actually hear the words that were used and I don't appreciate those kinds of comments directed towards the Chair. I just want to make it clear I did not hear the specific comments, and I ask all members to come to order.

Mr Gilchrist: Quite simply, just to conclude, the bottom line is that this bill will deliver on all the promises we laid out at the outset. The mayors of the six cities themselves, in their own report entitled Change for the Better, said that the savings from consolidating services and eliminating just one level of government, namely, Metro, were going to save \$240 million. It stands to reason, then, if you do the same consolidation of services and eliminate six governments, you'll certainly save the \$240 million, maybe as much as the \$300 million in the

KPMG report, but I'm quite comfortable with the \$240 million.

To believe that the mayors themselves have been willingly prepared to waste that quarter of a million dollars each and every year of their two-year mandate — two and a half years now, and in fact four months have passed since they tabled their own report where they said the time for these changes was now, was immediate. Well, four months have passed and not one mayor has taken one step to save one dollar. That's why we have to act.

This is not the time for more study, this is not the time for more rhetoric, this is the time for action. Our government was elected with a mandate to commit to municipal reform. We're very pleased that 350 of the 815 municipalities, including many in northern Ontario, have seen fit to take up the challenge and to undertake municipal reform. Unfortunately, there was no leadership at the municipal level here in Toronto. That leadership is coming from Queen's Park. That leadership is coming from the government of the day.

This bill is a worthy piece of legislation that will deliver on those savings. It means greater tax cuts and greater service delivery for the people of Toronto, and that's why I intend to support this bill.

Mr Colle: I think it's evident that the member for Scarborough East and the municipal affairs minister are saying the same things they were saying four or five months ago, the same empty words, the same jargon. They still don't get it. They have not listened to the people at the hearings. They have not listened to all the people who were at the public meetings. They don't get it.

What the people have said over and over again is, "We don't like being dictated to." They're not here to oppose you because of the mayors or the dollar figures. They're saying, "We are citizens who have basic democratic rights and you as a government are not dictators." Two members of your own caucus said that your government is run like a dictatorship. It's not just the opposition, it's not just the members of the public, their own caucus has said publicly, categorically — how else do you say it? — Mike Harris runs this province as if it were his personal fiefdom. He thinks when he won the election he bought the business. That's how he's running this province.

That is the most disgusting, shameful thing about Bill 103. No matter how many citizens spoke out against it, no matter how many people voted in a referendum, they're still laughing and trying to marginalize and minimize the fact that people went and voted in the referendum. They're still trying to write it off as just a silly exercise. Well, the message is very simple: The people of Metropolitan Toronto take their basic rights very seriously. You may take them away temporarily with Bill 103, and I see Bill 103 as a temporary thing, because the people are saying over and over again that they will never give in to this bill. They will resist it, they will fight it, and even though you pass it with your strong-arm tactics and you dictate it and you're able to give away \$11,000 rewards of patronage to your backbenchers to keep them in line, you can't buy off the people of Toronto. You

won't buy them off with 11,000 bucks like a lot of the backbenchers who have been bought off by the Premier.

Where is the Premier? He refused to go into a debate. He avoided the debate about Bill 103. They were asked at the committee on 103: "Would you take the hearings out to the local municipalities? Would you go out to Scarborough or East York?" The member for Scarborough East said, "No, we don't have the money to go to East York for a meeting." They didn't even have the guts or the respect to go to the city hall and have a public meeting, at East York city hall, Toronto city hall, Scarborough city hall and the other city halls. The Premier didn't even have the guts to do that. As he takes away their rights, as he dictates this odious bill against their wishes, he didn't even have the courage to go and tell them to their faces. He didn't have the courage to show up here today.

1630

He's a Premier who is basically saying, "I'm a dictator and I will do what I want to you no matter what you say." That is what is so odious about Bill 103. Bill 103 will go down in infamy as a bill that characterizes what we don't want in Canada. It's a disgraceful exercise of taking away of basic political rights that have taken hundreds of years to develop. This government has taken it away, and they have taken it away in the guise of saying it's about municipal boundaries.

This is essentially a two-part agenda. It's a political vendetta against their opponents, because they don't like the city of Toronto opposing them on rent control, they don't like the city of Toronto or East York opposing them on market value assessment. It's a political vendetta. Mike Harris said in East York: "You know why we're doing this. It's because we're going to get rid of those lefties in Toronto." That's what the Premier said. That's what the Premier's motives were. It's a political vendetta, and that's how cheap this bill is. That's how cheap this bill is, a cheap political vendetta to destroy basic democratic rights, the right to have something to say about how you are governed, to destroy one of the most viable communities in North America or the world, to put neighbourhoods at risk, to put a successful city at risk. Why? For a cheap political vendetta that this Premier has in his stupid little head. That's what it's all about.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oakwood, I think that is crossing the line a little bit, and I would ask you to withdraw that.

Mr Colle: I'll withdraw.

The second reason they're doing it is because they feel by dismantling political opposition, by dismantling the six cities and the six boards of education where the public in Metro have a say in their education and their municipal government, they can get at the tax dollars in Toronto. It's a tax grab. It's another cheap tax grab by this government to feed that ludicrous tax cut so they can take half a billion dollars out of education and half a billion dollars with the downloading. That is what it clearly is. It's a cheap political vendetta and it's a cheap tax grab by a government that is bankrupt.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener, come to order, please.

Mr Colle: It's bankrupt because it has walked away from fundamental rights that governments of all stripes have helped to institute in Ontario and in Metro, and they are turning away from those fundamental rights.

I say to people all over Ontario, I'm a bit disappointed that you don't realize that the fight here in Toronto and East York and Scarborough and Etobicoke is a fight for all of Ontario, because if they can stomp on our rights here in Toronto, you'd better believe they're going to be stomping on your rights in every community. We're not just fighting for what our city halls are about or our school boards; we're fighting against a dictatorial government that dictates to its own caucus, doesn't care about referendums, doesn't care about public hearings. In other words, they're saying they don't care about the Legislature, they don't care about this democratic government; they're going to do it anyway. If that doesn't affect people all over Ontario, I don't know what else does. It's a fundamental shift in the way we are governed, because it means the caucus members are all basically trained seals. If you disagree, you get heaved.

If you have a referendum, it doesn't matter. What recourse do the people have to go to? They tried the referendum. They tried faxing, writing, public meetings. It's amazing. I think it's a credit to the people of Toronto that they've been so civil in this undertaking. In this most disgraceful undertaking, they have maintained their civility, but I think if this were to happen in other countries, we would be seeing here what we saw in Belgrade and other cities. But the people of Toronto respect civility and they respect due process to the point where I think they're saying in the long run, "We will avenge 103." They will maybe let you get away with it today in passing this disgusting piece of odious — you can't even call it legislation. Even the court said it was illegal, the trusteeship. The Speaker found in the bill and the way it was advertised that there was a case for contempt of the Legislature, a bill that was refuted by 76%, 400,000 people, in the referendum.

There's probably never been a worse piece of garbage ever put before a Legislature in this country. It's just pure garbage. It doesn't even have the support of their own caucus. Their own caucus members said if they had a private vote, 70% of their own caucus would vote against it. It's just pure, utter garbage, and it's an insult to everybody in this country, in this province, in this city, that they could get away with it.

But the people will not let them get away with it, because they will resist this megacity, they will resist the quislings who promote it. They will fight it and they will overthrow it and they will replace it with democratic government once again. So although it is a sad, dark, disgusting day — the member for Scarborough East is smiling and grinning. He thinks he's getting away with something. I'll tell you that you and your kind are not getting away with this, that we will eventually win and the people will have their democratic institutions back, and we'll take that smirk off your face. You and Mike Harris and your kind will eventually find out that the people are right, and you will be removed from office

legitimately and go back to where you belong. You don't belong in the Legislature, because you are the authors of this piece of garbage. So remember —

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Would you address the Chair, please.

Mr Colle: Just in conclusion, the last word in this will be in the mouths of the citizens of Toronto, East York, Scarborough, Etobicoke, North York and the city of York. They will eventually undo this garbage and bring back good government, and despite Mike Harris and his henchmen, they will bring back democracy. I tell people: Don't give in. Resist. Don't worry what the Toronto Star says, or the Sun or the Globe or CFTO or CFRB. You're more important, you're more powerful than all that garbage. Resist. Never give in.

Ms Lankin: I've got to tell you that I am filled with a tremendous amount of emotion today. I am angry and I am sad. I feel so frustrated, so frustrated, and I know I express those emotions on behalf of so many people across Metro Toronto who have come together, who have attempted to make their voices heard, who have pled with a government that has just turned its back on the people, pled with the government to listen to reason, to listen to the wishes of the people, to no avail, to absolutely no avail.

I was — I was going to say "shocked," but you can't be shocked any more when I listen to the members opposite, the members of the government. I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs today in answer to a question, and I heard his parliamentary assistant just a few minutes ago in his contribution to this third reading debate, refer to the referendum in Metro Toronto and say that only 25% or 26% of people voted, which means that the rest of the people must support the government; only 400,000 people came out and voted in the referendum, and therefore the other two million people must support the government. I just find that such incredible arrogance, to stand there and to say that, and to say it in a serious way like you believe that.

During this process and the standoff that took place during committee of the whole, we did attempt to try and find a way for the government to respond to the main tenet of the opposition, that being that people really did not want one city, a megacity, people really did not believe the numbers that had been put forward by the government, people really wanted an opportunity to discuss in a rational sense, in a rational process, with full citizen involvement, the coordination of services and the support for economic development that was required across the whole economic region which is the greater Toronto area. This government just kept shoving people away, just kept refusing to listen to people.

1640

We suggested that you pull back this bill and really engage in a meaningful process, a one-year delay — a one-year delay only — and establish a citizens' group that would come forward, that could be involved in working out the solutions with you, that could take the good recommendations made in reports like the Golden report and others and work through them in a rational way to address the concerns of the people in the 905 belt, the GTA belt around Metro Toronto, their concerns with

respect to a greater Toronto area governing body, address those concerns with the people in Metro, find a way to really seriously address the needs of the economic region, those being coordination of transportation, coordination of planning around sewer and water, economic development, fair property taxation across the region. Yes, those are all important issues but they're important across the economic region.

At the same time they could ensure that whatever we are doing is building stronger local government, stronger government at a level where people can access it, where it affects their neighbourhoods, where planning and issues of that nature come and meet them at their very front door.

We said that citizens' assembly could work with government and could provide a model for legislation to be introduced by the fall and passed over a period of time in the fall and the beginning of the winter session and be in place for an election the following fall. A one-year delay — that's all — and a rational process. The one thing you did do was you mobilized people to want to get involved in civic politics. At least you could have provided the opportunity for them to get involved in a meaningful way. But you rejected that.

We said: "Okay, set this aside then and let's see whether or not in a shorter period of time we can begin in good-faith discussions to start to see a consensus emerge. If the government thinks that won't happen, is not happening or it's not a good-faith process, then come back with your bill and you can still pass it in time to proceed with perhaps a six-month delay." No, the government rejected that option.

Then we said: "All the way through this you have rejected the claims of the public and the claims of members of opposition parties that the majority of residents in Metropolitan Toronto and the cities contained therein actually opposed this. You rejected the process involved with the referendum. From the very beginning you've heaped scorn on the citizens' referendum process." I heard you all. You talked about the question. You criticized the question, you criticized the campaign, you criticized the actual process, even though in the majority of cases it was absolutely in line with legislation you had just passed. You criticized all of that so you could insulate yourselves from the results.

So we said to you: "Okay, let's have a referendum where we work jointly with you and the citizens who have been involved with this to create a question you can live with, a process you support and an equitable campaign that you believe meets the needs of distributing good information to the public, and let's live by the results of that." You're the government that proposes that referendum be the way of the future. We suggested that to you.

I believe that if you honestly had those kinds of criticisms and concerns about the referendum but you believed in the concept of referendum, you would have followed that. If you genuinely believed that the majority of people supported your legislation, you would have proceeded with that kind of referendum. If you don't believe that the majority of people support what you're doing, you have no moral authority to be proceeding as

you are here in this Legislature today — no moral authority. The people have said they do not want this legislation.

Mr Gilchrist: They supported us on June 8, 1995.

Ms Lankin: The member for Scarborough East heckles and says: "There was an election. We have the moral authority. We have the mandate." You did not campaign on this; in fact you campaigned on the exact opposite. The Premier has said very clearly in the past that he did not support and would not move with forced amalgamation. My friends, this is forced amalgamation. He said that he didn't support bigger governments. My friends, this is big government. This runs absolutely opposed to the things you campaigned on and put forward to the people and sought and gained a mandate on in the last election. My colleagues across the floor, you cannot dismiss the people and their opinion and their wishes in such a cavalier fashion and not pay a huge political price.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): You ought to know.

Ms Lankin: One of the members says, "You ought to know." You're right. We've all had experiences in government. We all know when it's necessary, sometimes, to step back and change your direction because the people don't support where you're headed, and sometimes it's really painful to do, and it's painful to your own political base. But you're elected to govern on behalf of the people of Ontario and you must respond to the people's wishes, and you have refused to do that here.

You know, the attitude which says, "Anyone who criticizes us is a special interest group, is simply a naysayer" — and we heard it again from the minister in his speech on this third reading — that attitude has so permeated the mindset of this government, you're treating your own members in that way. The most recent treatment of three of your own backbenchers who dared speak publicly in opposition to something the Premier wanted to do is an example of how far you will go to push through your own ideological agenda, no matter what, no matter who.

We all represent constituents and we bring forward those points of view, within your caucus and in the opposition caucuses, and it is incredibly important that the place for that here in this Legislature and that process be respected and that it be listened to. But we have seen a display of arrogance, a display of complete disregard for democratic process and expression of will of the people that will haunt your government.

If I feel sad and angry to begin with, the one thing I feel heartened by is that not just here in Metro, where we saw a tremendous uprising of citizens who are involved and engaged and who will continue to fight you every step of the way on this, but across the province, as I've travelled the province in the last month, I have heard from people how appalled they are at the behaviour and the process of this government.

Your reputation as arrogant and anti-democratic is one that is being widely understood, and that means when the day comes and when the final test comes, you won't be returned. I only hope there will be enough of Ontario left for us to rebuild the civil society we all want to share.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing this member to join in what I expected would be to some extent a debate which would try to engage in some ideas. But trying to listen to members opposite, the degree of the rhetoric that we are finding is not surprising. So what I would like to start with today —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): The Renaissance man.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York, come to order, please. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, take your seat for a moment. Could I ask the members of the opposition, both parties, to please come to order, particularly the member for Fort York. Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to start this presentation by quoting a member of the previous government regarding property tax assessment. These remarks were entered into the record on November 16, 1993:

“Across Ontario our property tax system is riddled with inequities and unfairness. Poor, low-income and moderate-income families, as well as the unemployed, are being penalized by a regressive property tax system which is not based on ability to pay.

“In Metropolitan Toronto we have a system which is based on 1940 market values and all the unfairness and inequity that entails. Many of us have tried to bring Metro’s property tax system into the 1990s through market value reassessment and, more recently, through a process called equalization. Although determined in our approach, we have been unsuccessful in making our property tax system in Metro a little fairer.”

“In November 1992, I introduced a resolution, which passed in this House, in which I asked that education taxes be taken off the backs of property taxpayers. Today I again ask this Parliament and this government to reform in a more meaningful way our antiquated, unfair, unequal, regressive property tax system by removing education financing from property taxes and provide tax relief to those people who need it most.”

1650

It would be very interesting, I think, for people in the gallery and also for members in this Legislature to know the identity of that speaker. The identity of that speaker was Mr Anthony Perruzza, the member for Downsview, who spoke those words in 1993. That’s four years ago. Now here we are in 1997, and without actually identifying that speaker you could almost word for word use those words on this side of the aisle today, because in my estimation one of the central, fundamental justifications for the introduction of Bill 103, the new unified city legislation, involves inexorably an interlinking of the property tax reform that we have proposed in Bill 106, the better and fairer financing act for municipalities in this province.

There is no doubt in my mind that the best way to bring these two indistinct and inseparable components together is through a package of these reforms, as found in Bill 103 and Bill 106. Without reform of Metro government, without reform of local government in Metropolitan Toronto, we will forever and a day continue

to have a system which is unfair, discriminatory, inequitable and regressive.

I find it most surprising that the Leader of the Opposition spoke today of Liberal values, that is, values that I thought he and his party were always championing, values like equity, values like fairness. Why is it that in this particular debate, this party would appear to be championing the reverse: unfairness, continuation of regressive property tax systems throughout different parts of Metropolitan Toronto?

Inequitable application of the property tax system throughout Metropolitan Toronto: I have spoken in this House on two other occasions regarding Bill 103, and I have focused, as I am focusing again today, on this interrelationship between the existing, inexorably inequitable property tax system and the reform of Metropolitan Toronto and local government.

If you go back and look at the history of this whole subject, the member for Oakwood certainly was brought into the loop in the late 1970s, early 1980s, when he championed that there ought to be consolidation of Metro’s existing municipalities, consolidation to get more efficient and effective service delivery systems. In my first speaking on this proposal back shortly before the Christmas recess, we mentioned that he ran on a platform back in 1982 which advocated what this government is carrying out. I ask the question again, what happened between 1982 and 1997 that made the original champion of amalgamation, consolidation or whatever you want to call it, change his mind so dramatically on this subject?

A lot of the critics say this is a new idea, that nobody’s ever really thought about amalgamation or consolidation, that there aren’t any studies on it, that nobody’s really debated it. If they believe in that position and adhere to and champion that position, they are missing to a great extent some of the vital history in Metropolitan Toronto that occurred when Frederick Gardiner first established Metro back in 1953 and today. From mayors Dennison, Givens, Nate Phillips, Allan Lamport, look at the records of debates in the city of Toronto in those years and at Metro council; the subject of amalgamation or consolidation was brought up in either forum.

There is a history, a presence today, of refocusing back on that particular item and putting it into its appropriate historical perspective. It’s not as if you can decouple history and say, “That never occurred.” It did. To say that it didn’t occur is to disown some of the great people who came before us in this House in local governments and in Metro government since 1953.

In my estimation, reforms in Bills 103 and 106 are the key, central points that need to be focused on when we talk about bringing some tax relief to those people who have been the silent majority over the last 40 years within Metro. The folks who tried before, for whatever reasons weren’t able to single out and to marshal the political will this government is exhibiting in presenting Bill 103 today. We are finally doing it.

While there may be a lot of sadness and despair, I look on the other side of the coin and find that those folks who have been working so hard in my riding and in many other ridings throughout Metropolitan Toronto will finally get some tax relief in their local property taxes,

much to the chagrin of the gloomsters and doomsters who believe the only way you can find things happening is that taxes will rise.

Finally, I want to reiterate a point which I find sadly surprising but not totally shocking. I hear the member for Dovercourt, Mr Silipo, suggest a "We will fight this on the beaches" theme, which suggests to me, and it's very alarming, that the folks who may get elected to the new amalgamated city would not work in the best interests of taxpayers throughout Metropolitan Toronto, that they would start from being uncooperative. I hope I heard that remark incorrectly, because I find it a little bit alarming. I'm sure he didn't really mean that. I'm hoping that in the context he was misspeaking, in a sense.

Thank you for allowing me these remarks today on what I regard as a historic, vital future for Metropolitan Toronto.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It's with mixed feelings and some sense of foreboding that I address this bill today, to see a government bring us a hollow, truncated bill, a bill they would rather cut pieces out of than bring back to normal debate, a bill these members don't have enough fortitude to stand up in public debate and discuss in this House — on second reading, they'd rather send it out; a government that had to be wrestled to the ground to send this out to public hearings; a government that needed a filibuster to even get it to consider the implications of what it was doing. This indeed is a sad day, but it's not a sad day for us, it's not a sad day for the people in the galleries; it's a sad day for this government.

Interjections.

Mr Kennedy: As we see the members opposite making noise, some of them for the first time in this debate — where has the member for St Andrew-St Patrick been? Where has the member for Scarborough Centre been? Where have you been in terms of representing the people who sent you here? To hear today this discussion reduced down to a 45-year-old rationale, the grasping of this caucus, which has absented itself from its democratic responsibilities, which has allowed a handful of people in the Premier's office to run roughshod over the largest metropolitan centre in this province —

1700

This is a quote from Ernie Eves to a different audience, to the people of Niagara Falls. The honourable Minister of Finance said that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is "not going to force amalgamation on anyone.... The municipalities will decide these things for themselves."

Ladies and gentlemen, today we have a massive dereliction of duty on the part of members on the other side of the House, the members for Scarborough West, Scarborough Centre, Scarborough-Ellesmere, Etobicoke-Rexdale, these members who could have made this a debate about the future of this city, who could have made this a debate about how to not just preserve but move forward with one of the best metropolitan areas that exists, a special responsibility that you were unable to come to terms with. We regret that.

We regret that there wasn't even an understanding of what our real risk was, because there is always, in the

course of this government, the loss that occurs when they twist the agenda to their particular pursuits. We all know what this pursuit is about. It's a convoluted path, but it leads very clearly back to the tax cut; it leads to a government that believes that at some imagined date in the future it can turn around and start to become popular. On behalf of the people of Metropolitan Toronto, that date is somewhere in the next century, when you're going to get a consideration on that kind of score.

But what needs to be said and what needs to be understood is what you're taking away this day. You're taking away from this city — you're jeopardizing, at least, because I don't think there's any sense of giving up on the part of people in this assembly — but you're at least jeopardizing, in a senseless and unnecessary way, cities that work, cities that are made up of complex component parts, cities that can house the most diverse population anywhere on the face of the earth with a minimum of problems, cities that depend on that fundamental acceptance of people's differences, of allowances, messy as they are, for people to feel that in this large, large agglomeration of 2.3 million people, bounded by millions more, they might matter for something.

The members opposite, unusually, I suppose, for a party that at one time adhered to a conservative outlook, are taking away that sense of individualism. They're taking away that fragile sense of civility and cohesion that we have in this city. It's not the result of any magic weave by our local municipal councils, but they're not the kind of people who deserve the kind of discredit this government tried to heap on them in the beginning, when we saw the first earmarks of what this bill was about, a submarine kind of bill trying to do by stealth what this government, again, did not have the courage to do up front: a government that couldn't say to the people of Metropolitan Toronto, "We want to take away some of your tax base"; that couldn't say to the people of Metropolitan Toronto, "We don't appreciate that diversity; we don't want that to work any more"; people who would take away from each individual who lives in this city something that we may not treasure immediately on the top of our mind but which everyone here is going to feel some sense of loss about, and that's an ability to participate, an ability to matter, to have some consequence and some significance.

This government may, as it did on December 17 in introducing the bill, feel a sense of insulation from all of this; it may, as it did on the day of March 3, when there was a referendum vote that told you clearly what you needed to know, that the public was interested, that this is not an issue which you could believe June 8, 1995, gave you the mandate for.

We've heard about your contradictions here today. You didn't have the guts to come back to us and say, "We made a mistake and here's what we can do." You tried to hide this, over and over again, cited for contempt by the Speaker for the first time in the Commonwealth for abusing this House.

We see instead, even in the Minister of Municipal Affairs' own neighbourhood in the town of Mount Dennis that makes up part of my riding, they voted 70% against. The significance of that is not that Mr Leach didn't carry

his own neighbourhood; the significance is that not one iota changed.

The member for Scarborough West led a committee effort that passed not one amendment; that heard some of the most eloquent speeches on the part of the people in Metropolitan Toronto of each of the cities and of Madeleine McDowell, someone from the city of York, who was brought to tears talking about the history of the place where she lives, the particularity of the place where she lives, the uniqueness of the place where she lives, which you would jeopardize for the sake of your fiscal agenda.

For the Madeleine McDowells, for the others who attend this House, for the people who have watched this debate, they need to know that April 21 is not the end of anything. April 21 is simply the time when the predictable Progressive Conservatives, the people who have the height of arrogance to believe that they have some kind of inherent right to have this place work as they wish, who are able to put down their own considerations, those of their voters, in order to fall in line for a Premier who doesn't even deign to give us his presence today and at other times and at the debates.

We see a mega-tendency on the part of this government that leads us to believe we're in for more of the same across the province. Just as you amalgamated the family support program to disaster for vulnerable households and children across this province, just as you would give us mega-hospitals instead of our community hospitals in this city, in Ottawa and as you threaten hospitals in small towns across the province, we know that risk is there. You would tell us this is no longer our city, that this is Mike Harris's city, thanks to your collaboration. We say no. You would tell us that you own this Legislature, that you are the guys who got the vote, as we heard today, on June 8. Let me tell you, you're only renting and, thanks to your actions today, the lease is running out.

Mr Marchese: M. Leach today introduced his speech by saying that this is indeed an historic day. It may be an historic day for M. Leach and M. Harris, but it is a historically bleak day for many people attending this Legislature today and those outside. It is a bleak day for the close to 1,000 deputants who came in front of the committee urging the government to withdraw this bill, in fact to repeal it, take it away. That's by and large what they did. It is a bleak day for those people who went to those Monday night meetings that the Citizens for Local Democracy have put on weekly. It may be a good day for Monsieur Leach, but it is not a happy day for the countless people who have voted against it.

I want to refer to a bill to give you a sense of how this government listens to the public, and that reference is to the rent protection package. If you recall, Mr Speaker, we had a package that was supposed to help tenants. That's what the title says. It was a funny thing because, as the deputants came in front of the committee, they had discovered in reading it that there was nothing in it for tenants at all; it wasn't a package for tenants, it was a package for landlords. Seventy per cent of all the deputants who came in front of the committee said: "We like the Rent Control Act that is in place. Please don't change it."

The members of this government who were in that committee received the report written up by the researcher on the 70% of the public that said no, received that report that spoke eloquently about why they should not get rid of rent control and simply sent that package to M. Leach for his gratification, his interest, his night-bed reading perhaps. They did not respond one single moment to anything they had heard.

We have M. Gilchrist today who says that the real work of listening to the public was in second reading. If they listened to the public as they did to the public around the Tenant Protection Act, we've got a real problem, because the fact of the matter is they don't listen.

1710

On Bill 103, as you know, we had a referendum; a referendum, by the way, sanctioned by this government through Bill 86. Bill 86 allows for municipalities to have a referendum in between elections. Then we go through the process of this vote and 76% of the population votes against the amalgamation, and what does this government do? It disregards 76% of the population that said no to amalgamation. M. Gilchrist comes here jokingly today, smilingly, about how happy he is and about how he and M. Leach and M. Harris listened to the public, and they say this with pride. "We've listened," they say. If they had listened to the referendum, they would have withdrawn Bill 103, because that's what the public said. This government has no longer any credibility on issues of referendum, of which this government is very proud to speak.

Soon they'll bring a referendum bill, but how can they have any credibility when they have been put to the test already through Bill 103 and they haven't listened? On this important issue they've said no to the public. How can they come back to the public later on saying: "We've got a better bill for you. Bill 86 wasn't it. We have a better bill that deals with referendum." They have lost any credibility on this issue, and it's sad.

M. Leach comes today and says, "We are one step closer to better government." What does he mean? Does M. Leach ever define it, the poor fellow? Never defines anything. M. Leach says over and over again, "We have increased accountability." What does that mean? If we have any accountability, as we see it through Queen's Park and this Conservative government, if this is what they mean by accountability, when a public votes on a referendum, they say no, and this government refuses to listen to the public, if this government is any measure of accountability, we're in trouble.

Then you have this big city called Toronto now, a big city comprising 2.4 million, getting bigger, and the fact of the matter is that the bigger the government gets, the more unaccountable it becomes. Witness it through this government. Witness it through them. They are completely inaccessible. Members of this public have tried countless times to reach these people. They cannot be reached, neither individually nor collectively. We had a referendum and they didn't listen. How do you reach a government that doesn't listen, therefore? M. Leach has the temerity to come today and say we'll have greater accountability through this new government. How? The poor man never defines it because he doesn't know.

The same poor fellow, before the election said, "We don't agree with amalgamation." In fact, he argued for local government, both he and Mr Harris. Lo and behold, things change once they get elected. Why? Because they need to amalgamate to be able to download more effectively what's yet to come. That's why they're doing it. All of this is under the guise of greater accountability. It means nothing. End of duplication. It means nothing to most people except the Tories around the Metro area, who believe you when you say it's going to be cheaper. We have heard evidence from all the experts in this field that there are no savings, that it will be more costly. You have disregarded that evidence too. You've disregarded the individual testimonies of experts and you've disregarded the referendum completely. You have no more respect, it seems to me, from these individuals who have appealed to you to do the right thing or from the public that has voted against you.

I have a beautiful letter written to me by an individual that I want to quickly read because it sort of encapsulates what people are feeling around this issue, written April 10:

"I'm extremely appreciative of your efforts in representing myself and the other 76% of the taxpayers who voted no against this bill. I not only oppose this bill and its content but I am utterly confused about the impetus of this legislation in the first place. Why, if we have the best city in the world, do we need such extensive retooling? Clearly, a more thoughtful and studied approach with minor changes would have been much wiser.

"It is also evident that this government has little regard for the democratic process. They exhibit utter disregard for respecting the views of the citizens who they are supposed to represent. In other regions of the world this is known as dictatorship."

Clearly, this is the *modus operandi* of this government. We have witnessed it over and over again. It is autocratic in its approach to things. It is arrogant, quite clearly, and visible all of the time, draconian in its methodology and it's government by fiat. We see it all the time and the public has seen it. What we have witnessed in the last couple of months is a movement, not created by the opposition — we did not create that movement. They created for themselves a movement not just to oppose this government but to tell you more clearly their expression of what a city should look like. That's what they did through the deputations. That's what they did through the referendum.

They have built a civic movement of which I am proud and proud to have been part of it. They have spoken, in my view, loud and clear. The referendum was the tool that you have allowed them to use and you have completely disregarded that tool that you gave them. In my view, it is a very shameful act of this government. It clearly speaks to the way you deal with the public, with the opposition and your own caucus members. The member for Wentworth North says clearly here they are undemocratic. "I'm a right-winger," he says — imagine that — "but I am democratic above all." Imagine that, and imagine what it says about this particular government and its *modus operandi*.

The public will continue to oppose this government and to bring forth good ideas that I hope they will listen to in the next short couple of years that they have left. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): At least, I say to the member for Scarborough North, I'm willing to get up and debate this issue and you have not, sir.

I'm pleased to stand on third reading of Bill 103 today to support Bill 103. When this bill was first introduced on December 17, 1996, it was a bill about eliminating waste and duplication and reducing the tax burden to property taxpayers within current boundaries of Metropolitan Toronto. Today, on April 21, 1997, Bill 103 is still about eliminating waste and duplication and reducing the tax burden on property taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto, so I'm pleased to support this bill on behalf of my constituents.

During the Bill 103 hearings on the general government committee, we heard over five weeks of hearings, over 600 presentations. This government listened very closely to what the people were saying. Originally, when this bill was proposed, we spoke about having 44 councillors and one elected mayor. People said that it wasn't enough representation, so we listened and we've increased the number from 44 councillors plus one mayor to 56 councillors plus one mayor. We believe that local representation will be guaranteed through this election of the 56 councillors. Now some of the naysayers are saying that 56 is too many, so I don't know what pleases these people who oppose us. I don't think anything does, quite frankly.

They spoke about neighbourhood committees and ensuring that they had a guaranteed voice in the new city, and we've done that by having the legislation say "shall" and not "may." We also heard about the board of trustees and we changed that, about safeguarding taxpayers' interest during the transition period and replacing it with a financial advisory board. Again, we've listened. The transition team to facilitate from seven cities to one, we've looked after that as well.

I say to the member for York South, who suggested that I as the member for Scarborough Centre haven't spoken on this issue, that if he attended a little more often he might find out that I've spoken no less than 13 times on this issue in this place. One of the issues on which I asked a question of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was that of the reserve funds. We've responded with our amendments by saying that the reserve funds were never available to the province and that this would be clarified and the province will never be able to access these reserves. I asked that question in this House and that was brought about. Also, about the time frame and the province determining the boundaries, this will be a local decision. The Metro boundary wards will be kept in place until then.

I also want to discuss what some of the other members opposite have said today. The member for Dovercourt and the member for Fort York spoke about this government not listening to what people said in a referendum.

I say to those two members and the members of the New Democratic Party that in 1994 the people of the city of Toronto held a referendum and they said they wanted to do away with the Metro level of government. I say to you, why did you not listen to those people? Why is it this government that's carrying out your dirty work, the work you would not do?

1720

When we talk about referendums, the NDP en masse voted against Bill 86, the bill that brought about referendum legislation for municipalities. So the member for Dovercourt and the member for Fort York need not lecture members of the government on listening to the public.

I know the member for Dovercourt said he has not seen a citizens' movement as large as this. Well, I have and so have the members on this side. It was called the election of June 8, 1995. That's when the people clearly spoke about wanting less government, fewer politicians, less government spending and lower taxes, and the parties opposite did not listen. The NDP didn't listen and the Liberal Party had a watered down version of the Common Sense Revolution which now they're suddenly all against. It was blue light.

Interjection.

Mr Newman: I say to the member for Oakwood, I'm proud to speak on behalf of the people from Scarborough Centre.

In closing, I ask the members of the Liberal Party and the members of the New Democratic Party to stand in their place today and say they will repeal Bill 103 should they ever form the government.

Mr Colle: Did you get \$11,000?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakwood, come to order.

Mr Newman: I've not heard a single member of the opposition party say they would repeal Bill 103. They've never said that. Tell us and tell the people of Ontario that you'll hike taxes and increase government spending back to the levels when you were in government. Have the guts to say that. Also, while you're at it, tell us you're going to repeal Bill 104 and increase the number of trustees back to the levels they're at. You haven't got the guts to do that.

In closing, the people of Scarborough have said to me that although some of them did not like amalgamation, they liked the filibuster even less. They said the filibuster was an absolute waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Mr Colle: You got \$11,000.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I think the member for Oakwood has had his opportunity to speak. Now I'd like to give others their opportunity.

Mr Newman: I know the member for Oakwood has no extra responsibilities. I think there's a clear reason for that.

I just wanted to say that the people of Scarborough have said they feel the filibuster was an absolute waste of money.

Interjections.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): The clock is going. That's the unfortunate thing.

I'm delighted to join my colleagues for about six or seven minutes. I'll do my very best to touch on some of the important points which have already been discussed already many times and on some that have been brought by the government side this afternoon.

Let me mention a couple of things. The bill was introduced under the pretence, or should I say false pretence, that this would provide better representation, more representation, would cost less, would save money and would cut politicians. Now, after five weeks of public hearings, the government is doing the total reverse.

Unfortunately, the government pretends to have listened to the people but it hasn't heard what the people have said. They didn't say, "We want more representation, from 44 to 57." What the people have said is: "We want to have input on how the city is going to be shaped. We have a stake in the city here and we want to have a say in how our city is going to be shaped in the future." That's what they said.

They didn't say, "From 44, go to 57." What are the savings all of a sudden? Two million dollars a year. You figured that out, what 13 new councillors will mean to the taxpayers of the new city. What are the savings you purport this will give to the citizens of Metro? Where are the savings? Two million dollars a year. They didn't say, "We don't have enough representation," they said, "We want to have a say in how we are going to be represented."

What the people of Toronto have said very resoundingly — 78% — is no, but they didn't say no to any changes whatsoever. Even we ourselves have said we've got to make some changes, but it's how we are going to make those changes, and when we have a chance to make those changes, we will round off the edges where it makes the difference.

The people have said, "We would be happy if you were to do exactly what you said in your own Common Sense Revolution, but what you're doing is the total opposite." Never anywhere in your Common Sense Revolution did you say, "We are going to download on you, already the poor taxpayers, welfare."

Mr Gilchrist: Wrong bill.

Mr Sergio: Wrong bill? I'll tell you "wrong bill." I've just come from the hearings on Bill 98, and do you know what the people are saying, to the member for Scarborough East? That there is no difference between Bills 26, 103, 98, 106. The government doesn't know itself what the content of each bill contains.

Do you know the essence of what we are doing here? They are so determined to push, to bully not only the members of the opposition but the people of Ontario, to push their own agenda, and the funny thing is it's not even your own agenda. You are not listening to the people on the street; you are listening to the people on Bay Street and that's the most unfortunate thing. You're unloading on the handicapped, on the poor, on the unemployed, on those who can least afford it. I'm addressing myself to the minister himself: You have a chance today to withdraw this bill and go into history as doing the right thing, or move into history and disappear completely, move into obscurity.

The people of Metropolitan Toronto did say, "This is not what you told us." If you want to eliminate Metro, eliminate Metro, to the member for Scarborough Centre. He just said, "The city of Toronto had a referendum and they said, 'Eliminate Metro'." Well, wonderful. Give the city of Toronto what they said they wanted. Abolish Metro. But 78% of the people didn't say that a few months ago. They said, "We don't want your megacity the way you're proposing it." It's unfortunate that they keep on saying, "We are listening to the people," but their ears, their minds, their hearts are completely closed. It's most unfortunate.

This is going to be a sad day in Ontario, because this does not affect only the city of Toronto or the future city of Toronto; the repercussions will be felt throughout the province of Ontario, with the downloading of transportation, social services, Ontario Housing and all kinds of other uncontrollable expenses unloaded on the local municipalities.

I wish the members would go and listen to what they are saying, even some of the largest organizations in our province — AMO — with respect to this bill and Bill 98. I said, "Didn't the government consult you prior to the drafting of this legislation?" Their answer was, "Of course they did." If they did, how come they are not listening? Whose agenda are they pushing ahead? Are they really listening to the people? Who is supposed to be the government? Those who were elected, we in the opposition, or the people out there? That's the real government, but they don't want to hear that. They don't want to understand that. When the people are saying, "You can't close hospitals," did you ever say that in your Common Sense Nonsense Revolution? Did you ever say that?

Mr Gilchrist: Yup.

Mr Sergio: Oh, you said that. I'm glad you said that, because we've got a few people in here. I can still see Mr Harris with the envelope. He said, "This is closed; not even one penny from education, not even one cent from the health care system." Well, we all know what happened to that. So when we are here listening to members of the government side saying, "We are doing what the people have said," baloney. Total BS. You are not doing what the people have said and you are not doing what you told the people prior to the election.

The unfortunate thing is that the government made those silly promises at a time when they knew they had not a chance to form the government, and now they must appease the people on Bay Street, not the people on the street, and it's most unfortunate.

1730

Unfortunately, my time is quickly running out. I would have so much to say, but in five minutes you just can't cover it. Isn't that something wonderful, something really to make history? The ministers are not in the House. The Premier hasn't been in this House here today at all. What would be the repercussions of all these bills, let alone Bill 103? Now we're going to have Bill 104. What are you going to tell the people of Ontario, the long-term-care people, the children? One third of the kids in Metro Toronto live in poverty, and what are they saying? "We have no money. We have to cut." Why is that? What about jobs? "Oh, that's not part of this bill." They don't

want to know about that, but everything you do is affecting our people in Ontario, and it's most unfortunate.

I'm going to close. It's most unfortunate that the debate is coming to a close and there are no ministers in the House here, not even the minister himself.

Mr Gilchrist: There is so.

Mr Sergio: Now he pretends to be a minister, for goodness sake. I hope we will have enough common sense among the backbenchers to either abstain or vote with the opposition and send a real message to Mr Harris and to Mr Leach. They have already been told, "Listen, you've got to be in the House; otherwise, you're going to get your ass kicked out like some of the other members." This is a very sad day, unfortunately.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I just want to point out a few facts to the members of the government. First, we keep hearing all day long and throughout this whole debate after the referendum from a government who said they would not listen to the results of a referendum, thinking we wouldn't really be able to pull it off. These people sitting here today, respectfully, did pull it off. They pulled it off, and not only did they pull it off, but I want to remind the members of the government caucus that fewer people voted for the Harris Tories in the Metro area than did in this referendum. There were more votes on the No side in this referendum than there were for these members of the Tory government in the last election. Furthermore, there was a higher turnout for this referendum than there was in the last municipal election, and this government has the gall and the arrogance to dismiss it because not enough people, in their view, turned out. I can guarantee you that if the vote had gone the other way, they would be having a different opinion on the results. They'd be crowing loudly about what a great result it was.

The other thing I want to point out is that this is a government that wants to bring in referenda, who crowed about that: "Let's bring the issues closer to the people." Then there was a real referendum created by the citizens of this area, and what did they say? "Oh, the issue is too complicated. They can't really understand what this is all about. We don't like the question." Well, they could have held their own if they really wanted to know what people thought. They refused to listen to the results of a referendum, which is something they said they believed in.

This is the government whose leader, the Premier of this province, said in the election campaign, "If I break a promise, I will resign." Perhaps the Premier should stand on his feet today and resign, because he said the exact opposite. Don't you remember? He said he would not eliminate local government; he would deal with the Metro area. Our caucus has given you an opportunity to explore further those ideas. You ignore it.

That's not the only promise your Premier has broken. He broke it on dumps and hearings. He broke it on health care. He broke it on education. If people out there still think the Premier of this province is governing for all the people and that even if they don't like some of the things he's doing, at least he's keeping his promises, look closely at this Premier's record and they will see a whole other story. He has broken promise after promise after promise, and because he's keeping his insane promise on

the tax cut, which is hurting Ontarians right across the province, because he's keeping that big, silly promise, which is absolutely —

Mr Gilchrist: It's 46,000 new jobs.

Ms Churley: This government is out of control, and the member for Scarborough East is a perfect example of that. They are out of control. I am serious here. Take a look at what you are doing not only to our city, the Metro area, but to the entire province. You are out of control. Those guys — maybe some women; I don't know — back there in the Premier's office are making all the decisions. They're telling you what to do and saying, "Don't worry, we're still high in the polls."

The Premier is willing to sacrifice on the altar the members of your caucus from the Metro area, because I can guarantee you that they are being sacrificed. I'm sure they're speaking up at caucus meetings. I would like to think so. There are three people who spoke out who have been punished. I believe the members from the Metro area, if they don't come out and vote against this bill today, are betraying the trust that people gave them when they were elected. You are betraying your constituents and you will pay for it. Not only will you pay for it in the polling booth, you will be paying for it in history, because you will go down in history, the entire lot of you, as the people who systematically destroyed the level of comprehensive, responsive government that I've been a part of and that I'm proud of, that we built over the years in this city. You are tearing it all down.

Mr Speaker, they have no respect for democracy. They have no respect for the people of this city, none whatsoever. That noise you hear out there is the sound of fury, and I suggest you listen and don't laugh, because these people will not go gently into the night. These people are just beginning. You've had to take out the guts of your bill. You have no power to implement this, and I can guarantee you that I will stand and my caucus will stand with those people who led this fight, and fight you every single step of the way, because what you are doing is morally and fundamentally wrong, but not only that, it's stupid. It's going to cost more money at the end of the day than we're paying now, and you will find that out in the near future.

I will end by appealing to the Metro members once again today. Stand up for what you know is right. Don't laugh at me; don't laugh at your constituents. This is an appeal from the heart, believe it or not. We can use our hearts and our reason sometimes. You're wrong. Admit it and stand up with us today. Stand up for your constituents.

Interruption.

The Speaker: Order. Can you ask that member of the gallery to be removed.

Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I rise today to object to Bill 103 and its third reading. The member for Scarborough East mentioned that I haven't spoken on this. Let me tell Scarborough East and Scarborough Centre and all the Tory Scarborough members out there who did not defend Scarborough, while the mayor is here today, Frank Faubert, watching this happening — I know it's a sad day for the mayor. He has just celebrated 200

years of bicentenary in Scarborough, and we'll be destroyed by these Tory bullies who decide not to listen to any kind of democracy.

You may say I have not spoken, but 78% of the people who voted spoke loud and clear and told this government, "No, we do not want megacity," through a referendum, through a process that you would like to endorse and said you would endorse. But all of a sudden — you even have a committee to handle referendum. What you have done is you have pulled back that committee itself. The member for Scarborough East was the mouthpiece for the government and continued to mouth his way through. He got his foot-in-mouth disease and they wouldn't pull him back.

It is sad. I am not at all surprised at the actions of this government. It's the same government that attacked the most vulnerable in our society and took about 20% of their income when they had nothing to do, no appeal on that. It's the same government that wiped out employment equity without any remorse. It's the same government that rammed Bill 26 through, wanting to amass on itself the great power of dictatorship. The people have spoken and the people will continue to speak, because they're seeing the kind of bully tactics, the arrogance, the undemocratic approach of this Tory government of Mike Harris and his bunch of individuals who believe they can go about ignoring the people like this.

1740

I am not at all surprised when they amass power on themselves and ignore the people, but I have great confidence in the democratic process. They will wait. I watched the same people who waited so patiently to send a clear message to your big old cousin Brian Mulroney and eliminate you to two people sitting in the House. I hope when the time comes around, and I do believe in this process, they'll wipe you all out.

I speak passionately about Scarborough because it is a city that is rather unique. All cities, of course, have a uniqueness about them. They protect the ability of citizenship, they protect the community environment. I speak, just because of the short time I have, of the members for Scarborough: Scarborough-Ellesmere, Scarborough East, Scarborough Centre, and of course my Scarborough West colleague who isn't here today. Maybe he extricated himself because he was so embarrassed at what you are doing. You have not protected Scarborough, and the people will not forget it. They will not forget you.

So when you say, my dear gentlemen and Madam Minister who are from Scarborough, that I have not spoken for Scarborough, I tell you, the people's voice is much louder, much more eloquent, and they will speak louder when they throw the bunch of you out at the next election because you've abandoned Scarborough. You've abandoned it in every way. You've made promises that you can't fulfil and you completely ignore. I'm not surprised. This is the same government that came in and wanted to wipe out rent control of all the most vulnerable people. It's the same government that, when people came forward to represent themselves, called them special interest groups.

Thousands and thousands of people came before you through writing letters, through petitions and through

representation in committees, and they have said it so eloquently, they have said it so intelligently. They said to you, "No, we do not want a megacity." What do you do? You insult their intelligence. You tinker around a bit. You go out on little speaking engagements. As a matter of fact, many of the Scarborough members we couldn't find. They were nowhere to be found in Scarborough when they were beckoned to respond to questions and answers from the people. They were in hiding for days. Sometimes when they asked Mr Gilchrist of Scarborough East — I remember many places he couldn't be found. But if there was a light of a camera, there he was, grinning away, hoping this would give him a vote all over.

They will remember you and they will remember all those in Scarborough who abandoned it. Scarborough is a special place, a city that will be there long after you're gone, and the people will speak. They will speak loud and clear, because they believe in democracy.

When we addressed the downloading issue, Mr Gilchrist, the member for Scarborough East, said, "It has nothing to do with it; downloading has nothing to do with megacity." I was surprised he said that, but having listened to him continuously, I realize that his capacity to understand that was limited, so yes, I understand it when you said it has nothing to do with it. It has a lot to do with it. It has a lot to do with how we govern and what money we get in that respect. When we get all those responsibilities dumped on that city, we ask, "Where is that money coming from?"

Tinkering around with it has not fooled the people in the least. They have not been fooled one bit by the way it is handled.

I understand that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has said that he's accessible. I can't recall him coming to very many hearings on Bill 103. He made some cameo appearances from time to time and said, "I have listened," and then he said he's accessible. In his arrogance, he said: "It doesn't matter what the people do. It doesn't matter about democracy. It doesn't matter about representation. I am just going to ram it through." Even on the last day, today, the day it will go through — you have the numbers and we know you're going to ram it through — even with that you have circumvented the process of the House today and used your majority to ram it through. But while we speak and we will continue to speak, we will remind the people that it is you who have done this to them.

Democracy is a very special thing. It is of course not perfect, as we have heard, but there is no other process of governing that I have seen of exemplified representation and hearing the people. This Conservative government, this Mike Harris government, decided to ignore all that. They would not like to see that. They insult the fact that people came forward to have a referendum. Mr Gilchrist, the member for Scarborough East, said the numbers were insignificant and they did not come out to vote. I just wonder how many people voted for him. Some of the same people who voted in that referendum, I am sure, offered their votes to him at that time. Of course, they'll reassess that.

I say the matter is not over. This is the government that declared war on the poor. This is the government

that declared a revolution on democracy. This is the government that has ignored all the process. This is the government that tried to snuff many of the members here from speaking. Three of them somehow, because they stood up for their principles, lost their positions as parliamentary assistants, but these individuals are much more principled. The people out there will remember this, and the time will come to vote these buggers out.

Mr Hampton: I want to say just a few words about where we're at now on third reading of this bill, to summarize what's happened. The fact is that people across this province acknowledge that there are some things we want to do to improve the structure of local government. The people across this province know that what the government is doing here in terms of this megacity bill runs completely contrary, completely at odds with all the recommendations that were received from the Golden commission, all the recommendations that were received from the Crombie panel.

We have a government here that despite the study, despite the recommendations of a lot of learned people, insists on imposing its agenda. What is that agenda? This government will tell us that it's about their obscure notion of efficiency. Well, the Conservative megacity is not about the best possible municipal government for 2.4 million people. It's about who has power in Ontario and who doesn't have it. It's about more bureaucracy, a mega-bureaucracy. It's about a bigger, less accessible government, a government that is neither responsible to people nor responsive to people.

1750

The government's megacity concept isn't about keeping an election promise or saving money and making things more efficient; it's about finding an excuse to download provincial costs and provincial responsibilities onto the municipal taxpayer. It's about forcing municipal taxes up and forcing municipal governments not only in Toronto but across Ontario to choose between increasing property taxes and cutting, closing or privatizing important services like long-term care for seniors, health care, day care, water and sewage treatment, social housing, fire protection and highway maintenance. That's what it's about.

Bill 103 is also about the future of 2.4 million people in the Metropolitan Toronto area and all those businesses and regions outside Metropolitan Toronto that depend on this healthy, prosperous, cosmopolitan area. Bill 103 is also about democracy. It's about grass-roots opposition to a callous, arrogant, bullying Conservative government determined to trample over anyone who dares to question its agenda. In fact, I can say that never in my political lifetime has there been such a need to renew democracy in this province and to renew democracy in this city. Never have we needed such a renewal as we need now in the face of this government's bullying agenda.

I want to say just a bit about what this new Conservative megacity government will look like. What's the scheme here? What's operating under the surface? What it is is this: It's about privileged access to government, both at Queen's Park and in the megacity halls. It's about services and institutions waiting to be privatized and it's about lobbyists, lawyers, bankers and consultants salivat-

ing at the opportunity to make a buck while it happens. That is the purpose of this megacity. That's the right-wing agenda.

The right-wing megacity scheme is crucial to the Conservative's plan to eviscerate government that can respond and act on behalf of people. The fact is, with bills 103 and 104 and Bill 84 to privatize firefighting in the province, and all the related downloading legislation, the Conservatives want to bring public services in Ontario down to the ground. They want to destroy many of the public services, much of the quality of public life that we have built over 50 years. They want to cripple it or they want to destroy it.

The procedure to do that is to financially hamstring the choices municipalities can make about day care, about long-term care, about public health, about public housing, about transportation, water, policing and social assistance. All these things are targets of this right-wing agenda. But these things are not just for consumption; they are the means of life and the quality of life in this city and in this province. They are indispensable to the workings of a fair and accessible society.

I can say to this government that despite your scheme, despite how much you are willing to force this through, despite the fact that you're so committed to this agenda that you will ignore the overwhelming results of referenda that voted against you, despite your full-fledged commitment to this, your strategy will not work. You cannot turn the quality of public life in Toronto and in Ontario into a commodity that can be bought and sold on the market. You can't turn Ontario into a place where everything that has made public life good will now be thrown into the marketplace and the quality of life will depend upon how much money we have. You can't do it because people won't let you do it.

You think this is a triumph for you. You are quite wrong. This is not triumph for you; this is just the end of the very beginning. People have not yet begun to fight against you, people have not yet begun to rally and to inform and to create awareness among their neighbours; they have just started to do that. When this continues from community to community across this province, you are going to pay a huge price.

People understand that what has made Toronto one of the best cities in the world to live in and what has made Ontario one of the best provinces in North America to live in is not some phoney tax scheme for the wealthy, is not turning our quality of life into a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace. People understand that what has made Toronto one of the best cities in the world to live in and made this province one of the best places in North America to live in has been the quality of public life, the quality of our public institutions, the responsiveness and the responsible nature of our governments. People understand that.

People are not prepared to turn good-quality firefighting services into a private sector commodity that responds to one person if you're wealthy and can pay for fire protection and doesn't respond if you can't afford to pay. People are not prepared to turn their back on things like child care, like decent housing, like decent neighbourhoods. People are not prepared to turn their backs on

these things, and so as they understand the fullness of this agenda, as they understand the right-wing radicalness of this agenda, they are going to fight you more and more. You are not going to win here. You're not going to triumph.

What you've succeeded in doing is simply to awaken more and more people to how right-wing your agenda is, to how destructive your agenda is to public life and to how destructive your agenda is to the kind of province, the kinds of communities, the kind of city Toronto is and that we've built everywhere across this province.

I say to you, Speaker, and you've presided over some tough times in this Legislature surrounding this bill, you won't get any rest. You won't get any rest because this is just the beginning of the process, not the end.

To the government, I'll make a prediction. We'll be back here within two or three years fixing all the mistakes you've made, fixing the destruction you're now trying to push on to the citizens of this city and the destruction you're now trying to push on to the citizens of this province. We'll be back here fixing it. We'll be back here returning to a quality of life that provides for good community. We'll be back here returning and preparing to return to the people government that is responsive to them and is responsible to them at the local level. You have not won, you have only started the fight, and people are going to take that fight back to you time and time again.

I started initially to talk about democracy and I want to say just a couple more words about democracy. This legislation has absolutely no credibility. You didn't campaign on it. In fact, many of the cabinet ministers and Toronto backbenchers in this government denied over and over again before the last provincial election and during the last provincial election that you would ever try to do anything like this.

This legislation was submitted to a series of referenda across this city and you know the results: 76% of the people who turned out for those referenda voted against what you're doing. You can never quibble with results like that. You lost, you have no support for this legislation, this legislation is completely contrary to the public will, yet you continue.

You took this legislation out for some public hearings, and you heard over and over again, overwhelmingly, the opposition of the public to this legislation. This legislation has no credibility. It has no foundation with people, it has no foundation with the public will. For that reason people will feel they are fully entitled to oppose you not just now but at every step down the road. You are imposing on people something that is absolutely contrary to their will, contrary to their wishes and contrary to their understanding of their community. I will say to this government, we will be there with the public to fight you every step of the way. Shame on you.

The Speaker: Shall the bill be now read for a third time?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1801 to 1806.

The Speaker: Order. I again caution the galleries, there are no outbursts.

All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Palladini, Al
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Parker, John L.
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Pettit, Trevor
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Carroll, Jack	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
DeFaria, Carl	Johnson, Ron	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Elliott, Brenda	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Eves, Ernie L.	Leach, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fisher, Barbara	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Fox, Gary	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	McLean, Allan K.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: Those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Gerretsen, John	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaître, Bernard	McLeod, Lyn
Boyd, Marion	Gravelle, Michael	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Morin, Gilles E.
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	North, Peter
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony	Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 72; the nays are 42.

The Speaker: Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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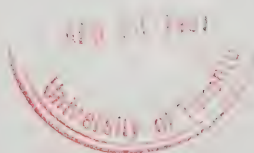
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Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 avril 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUDBURY ISSUES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This Thursday the Minister of Northern Development and Mines will be making a rare public visit to Sudbury to, we hope, make a funding announcement concerning the northern Ontario community cancer care program, which we have asked for repeatedly from this government over the course of the last year and a half. This worthwhile initiative and welcome announcement of funding will be the culmination of the hard work of the northeastern and north-western Ontario regional cancer centres and the realization of the vision of the likes of Gerry Loughheed Jr and Dr Dahli Dahliwal, who have championed this cause.

The second reason for the minister's visit to Sudbury is to speak to the chamber of commerce. While I'm sure the minister will deliver a barn burner of a speech, he will likely leave out a few important facts. He probably won't mention the fact that the downloading exercise is not revenue-neutral. He probably will also forget to inform the people that the Sudburians in the region of Sudbury will be hit by \$105 million of extra money because of this downloading. He will probably forget to tell the chamber that the Partnership for Community Prosperity, a coalition of business and labour in Sudbury, has repeatedly been asking for a meeting with himself and/or the Premier for the last six months, but to no avail. The minister's rosy picture that he will try to paint will probably forget to mention that over 2,000 jobs have left the north because of this government.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Four months ago this Conservative government passed Bill 82, the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act. At the time the Attorney General said, "This bill will permit us at the earliest possible time to begin to have enforcement techniques that will be effective and will protect and put money into the hands of women and children."

The member for Dufferin-Peel went one further, no doubt at the urging of the Attorney General. He said: "By the end of January, we will begin the implementation of our key enforcement tools.... By the summer of 1997, all our tough new enforcement tools will be in place."

What a joke. This Conservative government has yet to make Bill 82 the law. The Attorney General in December had the audacity to suggest that the opposition was holding up passage of Bill 82. Now, four months later, this same Attorney General is still so incompetent that he can't even get his own bill passed into law.

There are no new enforcement tools in place today. Not a single woman or family counting on Bill 82 has seen one penny of support payments owing. Women and children who were told by this government that their problems would be fixed by Bill 82 have been completely betrayed by this Attorney General. He has proven to be as incompetent in getting his own bill passed into law as he has been in dealing with this plan since last August when he closed the regional offices and laid off 290 staff.

This Attorney General's treatment of women and children is shameful.

SCARBOROUGH SCHOOL ANNIVERSARIES

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I rise today to call the attention to all members of the House to a landmark occasion in my Scarborough riding. In the space of a week, two schools in my riding will pass significant milestones. Birch Cliff Heights Public School and Regent Heights Junior Public School will both be celebrating 75th anniversaries in the month of May.

For the last 75 years, since 1922, these two schools have been an integral part of education in Scarborough and vital pillars of the community. A school is more than just bricks and mortar and desks and blackboards. Far more important than the actual physical school are the dedicated professionals who work to teach our children. It's the hard work and devotion of principals, teachers, secretaries, nurses and support staff that help our children to learn and grow in a safe environment. Both the schools have grown and adapted to the changing needs of education in this province over the years.

Regent Heights began as a frame portable built on Bexhill Avenue. Over the years it has moved several times as educators moved the portable around, rented additional spaces in community halls and church basements and renovated the portable. In 1946 construction began on the existing site on Pharmacy Avenue. The school has continued to expand and improve since that date, serving more students with more diverse needs.

Birch Cliff Heights began in 1922 as a four-classroom school with a basement. The school grew steadily until it consisted of 22 classrooms and a gymnasium by 1958. Enrolment peaked in 1962 at 761 students.

It is with great pleasure that I recognize these two excellent schools on their 75th anniversary and wish them the best in the next 75.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): The 12 municipal governments of Ottawa-Carleton, including the regional government, are willing to move forward with municipal governance reform. The 12 councils have already developed and unanimously approved a locally designed process. Unfortunately, governance reform in Ontario's second-largest municipality in the metropolitan area can't go ahead without the approval of the provincial government, but the only thing the Minister of Municipal Affairs says is, "Persevere and develop a local process."

Minister, they have a local process but you won't act. Why is it that when there is a local agreement, as is the case with Ottawa-Carleton, you won't act, but in the case of Metro Toronto, where there is no agreement, you are more than willing to impose your will?

Minister, in letters to you and the Premier, the mayor of Ottawa states that you have created an untenable situation. It's imperative that we seize on the climate of consensus in Ottawa-Carleton. The municipalities are together on this, but you are the missing link. Give your approval and allow governance reform to move forward in a stable framework by postponing municipal elections in the Ottawa-Carleton area until the late spring of 1998.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): If I could have a page come over, I have some materials I would like to have distributed to the members of the government caucus. I bring this back from a meeting I attended last night — thank you, Stuart; give one to each of the government members on the other side — which was the 20th weekly meeting of Citizens for Local Democracy. The member for Dovercourt and the member for Riverdale accompanied me to that meeting last night.

The government may have thought yesterday in passing Bill 103 and in rushing down the hall to the Lieutenant Governor's suite to get royal assent that the fight was over, that they had won the fight and they could just put this chapter behind them. Quite frankly, exactly the opposite is true. Last night we heard the sense of conviction from Citizens for Local Democracy and the mayors of the municipalities in Metro Toronto that this will continue to be fought in the courts during the implementation.

I also want to let you know, for those of you outside of Metro who think, "This won't bother us any more," Citizens for Local Democracy groups are springing up in places like Kitchener, Peterborough, Belleville, coming to a community near you soon. What they've sent back to you, though, is a hope that you will listen in the future. It says, "Government, please clean out your ears." Here are a couple of Q'Tips. We hope you'll put them to good use.

1340

PASSOVER

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): On the evening of April 21, Ontario's Jewish community, and indeed Jews the world over, began the celebration of Passover, the ancient Jewish festival of unleavened bread, the season of their freedom as the people of God, and the oldest continuously performed ceremony in human history.

Passover dramatically recalls the liberation of the children of Israel by God through the prophet Moses and their passing over from the place of their enslavement in Egypt to the promised land, "flowing with milk and honey."

Passover is a celebration of Jewish history and identity. The benedictions, the wine and other foods that are eaten at the Passover table, the recitals and the prayers — all these bring to life the great events and the people of Israel's past. At this holiest time of the Jewish year, Jews renew a sense of peoplehood and community. They recall the days of history's glory, as well as the suffering that has been their historic companion on their journey to final freedom and statehood.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to wish my Jewish community of Hamilton and throughout Ontario a very happy Passover, together with the holiday wish that we celebrate Passover next year in Jerusalem. Shalom.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I rise today to bring the voices of 132,000 petitioners to this Legislature. The citizens of this province are uniting across party and linguistic lines to implore the government to save the Montfort Hospital. The Montfort does not simply give a passing nod to equality of care; rather, it serves as a model of what the framers of Bill 8 could only dream about: a province where every person could feel totally at home.

Thousands of Ontarians are finally beginning to realize the deeper importance of the Montfort. It is not just a hospital; it is the heart of a community. Closing the Montfort would do nothing less than pull apart our history and traditions, which developed to meet needs that are as great today as ever.

On March 22 in Ottawa, some 10,000 people participated in a historic rally. In an outpouring of emotion, they delivered a simple message that nevertheless cloaks a complex reality: To protect a vibrant and historic community, the Montfort must survive.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Yesterday we sat in this place as the government passed Bill 103. It was a bleak day for everyone who has participated in that debate: a bleak day for the deputants, the countless deputations that we had in committee; a bleak day for the thousands of local citizens who have been involved all over Metropolitan Toronto in their efforts to preserve local autonomy and local government.

I was reading today a column by John Barber. He speaks rather eloquently of the work that those individuals have done in resisting and fighting Bill 103. He says:

"There is one thing that all parties to this debate, including the government, appear to agree on. They all say there is great passion and great talent in civic Toronto; that Toronto citizens care deeply about their city and how it is governed. The antis proved it with their miraculous, albeit fruitless campaign to resist the

megacity. The Tories say they are counting on it to make the megacity work.

"I wish I shared the faith. There is only so much effort people can devote to a lost cause...and look where it gets you. Despite all the brave talk, the spirit is broken."

I have to tell you, from the discussions I've had with many people yesterday, the spirit is not broken. That spirit of fighting against this government against this bill and so many other bills that are coming will continue, and they will fight back against this government.

VICTORIAN ORDER OF NURSES CENTENNIAL

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): This year the Victorian Order of Nurses, Canada's leading community health care organization, celebrates 100 years of innovative "Caring for Life."

The seeds of the VON were sown in 1896 at an annual meeting of the newly formed National Council of Women of Canada. Women from across the Dominion shared accounts of poor public health conditions in both the slums of the eastern cities and the frontier settlements of Canada's west and northwest. The meeting adopted a resolution asking Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, a founder of the council and the wife of Canada's Governor General, to establish a visiting nurses organization for Canada.

VON Canada received its royal charter the following year, and within a few months VON branches were established in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax.

Today the VON provides more than 50 different services under the headings of visiting nursing, health promotion and support services. The VON employs some 7,000 registered nurses and allied health care professionals, assisted by 9,000 volunteers. While the organization is rightly proud of its high professional standards, volunteers have always been the lifeblood of the VON.

On behalf of all members in this House, I am honoured to thank the many thousands of Canadians who have contributed to the VON's success in meeting the health care needs of communities across our great nation. We wish you another 100 years of successful "Caring for Life."

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the 1996 annual report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 103, An Act to replace the seven existing municipal governments of Metropolitan Toronto by incorporating a new municipality to be known as the City of Toronto / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à remplacer les sept administrations municipales existantes de la communauté urbaine de Toronto en constituant une nouvelle municipalité appelée la cité de Toronto.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to ask the indulgence of the House for unanimous consent to have the government make a statement regarding Earth Day today.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for a statement on Earth Day? I hear a no.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Who said no?

The Speaker: Member for Fort York, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: As you know, the government has announced its intention to call for debate this afternoon an amended time allocation motion regarding Bill 104. In our view, this motion should be ruled out of order. I've provided you with a copy of my opinions on the subject earlier today to assist you in making a ruling this afternoon. With your indulgence, I will briefly outline my submission to the House.

The Speaker: With the greatest respect to the member for Algoma, it is simply on the order paper. It hasn't been called so it's not before the House. Those submissions will be properly made when that order is in fact called, if it is called.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, I want to talk to you about Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, which ought more appropriately to be called the Fewer Resources for Ontario Schools Act.

You tell us that your bill is going to improve the quality of education for Ontario students. We don't see it and neither do Ontario's parents, students or teachers, and neither, for that matter, do People for Education, who today released a very interesting report called Real Stories, Real Schools, which describes in intimate detail the impact that your policies are having on schools right now.

Minister, you tell us time and time again that it is your sincere and genuine intent to protect education in Ontario. So far you've cut \$400 million. You tell us that you can find at least another \$1 billion in there in savings. Furthermore, on your watch, over 50 Ontario school boards have laid off teachers. Tell us, why should we trust you when it comes to Bill 104?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): To the Leader of the Opposition, Bill 104 is a bill that will help to reduce the amount of duplication involved in our education system, reduce the amount of bureaucracy, reduce the number of politicians who are

involved in our education system from about 1,900 to about 700. That is an awful lot of people.

I think a lot of folks who have done reports on this have recognized that we need to make these moves in order to improve our education system; in order to, most importantly, improve student achievement, because as I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition knows, Ontario has ranked in about the middle of the pack in international and pan-Canadian tests in the past. Those kinds of results by the students of Ontario do not reflect the quality of our teachers — obviously you have some of the most qualified teachers in North America — and do not reflect the quality of our students.

We think we need to give our students a better opportunity. We think it's important that each student in Ontario have an equal opportunity to a first-quality education. That is why we've introduced Bill 104 as part of a step in reforms for our education system.

1350

Mr McGuinty: You, sir, have a very serious credibility problem when it comes to being a protector of education in Ontario.

Because of you and your policies at least 25 boards across the province have been forced to cut junior kindergarten. Many others are struggling to keep it afloat when we all know, in our heart of hearts, that as we stand on the precipice of the 21st century we need more education, not less. Because of you another 23 boards have cut special education, education designed to meet the needs of those who are learning disabled; 23 boards have cut in that area. You're also the minister who declared guidance, libraries, even basic maintenance and heating as not constituting any real part of classroom funding. I'm going to ask you again, Minister: Given this record of very dubious achievements, how can you expect us to trust you when it comes to Bill 104?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I find it curious at best that with those kinds of distortions, the Leader of the Opposition would talk about credibility. The only person whose credibility can be questioned in this House is the Leader of the Opposition when he opposes the changes in Bill 104, because if I can quote directly from the Leader of the Opposition, he said, "I think there's generally a fairly broad support for reduction in school boards." That was on January 13, 1997.

Let me address the issue of removing education from the property tax since that's topical: "That's a good thing to do." That's a quote from the Leader of the Opposition on February 1, 1997. If there's an issue of credibility, it rests there with the Leader of the Opposition, who is on the record as supporting the initiatives in Bill 104. Why don't you just help us pass the bill and improve education in Ontario?

Mr McGuinty: No matter what you tell us, the people in this province know what you've done to their schools — not for them, what you've done to them. Students, teachers and parents know that class sizes today are larger. They know there are fewer programs and fewer services. You can't hide that.

But what they don't know and what you're not telling them is what will happen when you assume full control. You won't tell us how much you're going to cut once

you eliminate local control of schools. You won't tell us the level of funding you plan to leave for students in different parts of the province. You won't even tell us about the transition costs that are going to be there when you proceed with your plans.

Given what you've already done to Ontario schools and given what you're not telling us about right now, how can expect the people of this province to honestly believe that Bill 104 is in the interests of Ontario students?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that as a result of the social contract some class sizes in Ontario went up. We find that unacceptable. I'm also glad the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that when his party was in power they failed to address the general legislative grant program in this province that has had second-class students, from a funding point of view, for decades.

This government is taking those issues on to improve education, to improve student achievement. What will be the results of our reform? I'm proud to say that the results of our reforms will be higher standards in each and every grade; testing of students province-wide, which we've already initiated this year; better supports for teachers; and a better of quality education for every student in this province. That will be the result of our reforms.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My next question is for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I think she's just coming in right now. I'll just allow her a moment to take her seat.

Minister, you will recall that yesterday I raised the shocking reality of the large number of cases of child abuse in our province: broken bones, cigarette burns, bruises and shattered spirits. You will know that we all have a very special responsibility to ensure that our children are protected and enjoy a good quality of life. Unfortunately, for too many of Ontario's kids this isn't the case. This is a time of crisis for our children, but your only action to date of any substance has been to cut 5% from the budget of Ontario's children's aid societies. That's \$17 million that could have been used to help these children.

You're telling us, Minister, that for you protecting children is a top priority. If it's such a priority, then I want you to stand up right now and tell me why it is that on your watch 340 full-time staff have been laid off from children's aid societies in Ontario.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): My apology to the member of the opposition for not being here when he started his question. I was following up on an issue with a parent of a disabled kid from one of his backbenchers who gave me a letter which I asked my staff to follow up on.

I would like to reiterate what I said yesterday, that our government does take quite seriously what is happening at the coroner's inquest, the task force that the coroner and the children's aid societies, with the support of the ministry are undertaking, to try and see how the system

has failed children in the past and what we can do to make sure they're not falling through the cracks.

As I mentioned, we announced last week almost \$45 million to try and shift resources to intervention and prevention, the kind of steps we need is one of the things we've done, and there are many other things we have undertaken and are prepared to undertake in response to the task force to improve the system.

Mr McGuinty: That lends no comfort whatsoever to the kids of this province who are the subject of abuse today. You haven't listened and you haven't acted. In November 1996, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies published a number of proposed amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. That was sent to the Minister of Community and Social Services in November 1996. It is now six months later and you haven't acted on a single one of those recommendations. Minister, if protecting Ontario's children is such a high priority for you, why have you failed to act on those recommendations?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, we have not failed to act. We are in the process of doing many things in response to the children's aid society comments to us and also in response to the task force recommendations. They did their interim report some weeks ago.

Last spring we started the process for new risk assessment tools, to select what is called the single assessment tool to help workers make better judgements on risks. The implementation plan has been developed. It's under way; it will be finished by this fall. Last spring the consulting contract was signed for the new information system for the new computer technology; last summer, standards revised; last summer, protocols with the coroner and the children's aid society. I have a list here of the things we have done and we have under way to try and improve the system.

If the honourable member wishes to provide me with more suggestions and recommendations about how we can improve the system, I would be very pleased to hear them.

1400

Mr McGuinty: Minister, we've learned that it takes an average of 44 months before a child can be permanently rescued from abuse — 44 months. If you are the subject of abuse and you are four years of age, you may very well have been the subject of abuse for your entire life before you are removed from that situation.

You have talked about some Band-Aid solutions. The fact of the matter is caseloads are going up; you're laying off full-time staff at children's aid societies. Concrete proposals have been put before you by the children's aid societies and you have failed to act.

Furthermore, when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves came to you and said, "I need 17 million bucks from Ontario's kids who happen to be abused," you know what you did? You didn't tell them to go fly a kite. You said, "You can have it." You're not fulfilling your obligation to Ontario's kids. You let \$17 million slip from your hands.

What are you going to do, Minister? Tell me today for Ontario's kids.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Leader of the official opposition, thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I guess if the honourable member is so concerned about things that should have been done and legislation that should have been done, he might wish to ask his colleagues who were in the Liberal government when they didn't proceed with the legislation and the amendments that they brought forward, because we quite recognize —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the honourable member doesn't think that new investments for a new computer technology system to support the workers is helping; if he doesn't think that working with regulatory colleges to try and improve the education and support to professionals who are seeing child abuse or potential child abuse cases is worthwhile; if he doesn't think that \$800,000 for professional education is worthwhile; if he doesn't think reviewing the legislation with an eye to enacting the recommendations that the coroner or the children's aid societies have put forward is worthwhile; if he doesn't think bringing in legislation to improve social workers, to make them self-regulating professionals, is worthwhile — those are all things that this government is undertaking — if he doesn't think they are worthwhile —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question, third party.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Earlier today the Minister of Education received a petition from school children. The petition reflects their fears and insecurities about what is happening in their schools because of his cutbacks to education. They echo what was said by children who appeared before the standing committee to ask you not to ram through Bill 104.

Grade 3 student Allison Elwell told the committee she is worried about losing her education. Like so many other Ontario children, she has already lost some library. These children are worried with good reason, Minister. It's their education that's going to be affected. They are the children who may see money taken from their classrooms to pay for your transition costs. Can you explain to Allison why you are ramming through a bill that already has elementary school children worried?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): In response to the leader of the third party, can I say that it's disappointing personally, and I'm sure to all my colleagues and to the members opposite, I'm sure, in many cases, that school children in this province have such a distorted view of what's in Bill 104. I'm not sure of the origins of that distorted view, but there are some people who actually believe that there are fiscal measures in Bill 104 and in some cases, as shocking as this may be, some children have been told by parties unknown to me that there are reductions and cuts to their school system intended by Bill 104.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Nothing could be further from the truth.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Nothing could be further from the truth — nothing. I want to thank my colleagues for

pointing that out, because obviously — thank you, Gerry —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Mr Speaker, I'll be brief. Obviously there's a time for some amusement in this House from time to time. Nothing, though, is amusing I'm sure to anyone about young children being used for political purposes. I find that repugnant. I want to be very clear that the purpose of Bill 104 is to reduce the bureaucracy in our education system and to reduce the number of politicians in our education system.

Mr Hampton: The only thing we're not amused about, Minister, is your cavalier attitude. As you go about cutting \$5 million and \$6 million from this year's education budget, from school boards, when you promised you wouldn't do it, people have good reason to be worried.

But it gets worse. Yesterday you shamelessly told a press conference that you don't know what the cost of transition will be for Bill 104, you don't know how many school board staff will lose their jobs and you don't know how much money is needed to educate a child in Ontario. In southwestern Ontario you're going to force the amalgamation of four boards, and they already know that the 1997 transition cost will be \$2 million. They don't know where that money is going to come from. They're afraid you're going to force them to take it out of the classroom.

Minister, it's a serious question: Will you make Allison and all those other children a promise? Will you promise her that she won't have to lose any more money from the library and from the classroom to pay for your transition costs?

Hon Mr Snobelen: One of the reasons I was so pleased to make an announcement earlier that assured students across the province that in their 1997-98 year there'll be no interruption in programs and what's offered to those students is that we wanted to allay those fears that there would be some interruption in the quality of education during that year. There will not be, and we've made that assurance.

We know for certain that the results of Bill 104 will be a reduction in the cost — outside estimates are \$150 million a year — for waste and duplication and bureaucracy in our system. We know that, and we also know that the actions of the leader of the third party have delayed the passage of this bill by three weeks, have delayed getting the answers —

Applause.

Hon Mr Snobelen: The glee of the third party at delaying three weeks and wasting \$2.5 million is obviously as good today as it was yesterday, but I can tell you this: That delay is delaying the school boards, the ministry, the Education Improvement Commission from getting on with the business of having this transition, of making it smooth for the benefit of our students. I'd call on the leader of the third party not to further delay, to let us improve the system of education for those students.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a supplementary regarding the implementation of Bill 104 if it passes. I have the draft guidelines for the establishment of the

local education improvement committees that have been published by the proposed Education Improvement Commission.

These committees will have to be established by trustees in existing boards. They're going to have to set up subcommittees, including human resources subcommittees with employees represented. They have to appoint coordinators and establish steering committees. They will make recommendations to the commission. They will develop amalgamation work plans with time lines. They will develop and implement local communications and consultation strategy. They will prepare an inventory of assets and liabilities on existing staff of all involved boards. They will play a role in determining trustee distribution in the new boards and they will report regularly to their existing boards. They have to do all of this by December 31 of this year, just eight months from now.

Minister, aren't you setting up a situation which will ensure that this work cannot be done in time, will not be done properly? You'll then blame incompetent school boards. Why don't you do this in a time frame that is reasonable and short?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Even the member for Algoma should be embarrassed to talk about time compression as he and his party delay the passage of the bill. I think that's sad.

1410

We've heard a lot about this bill, a lot about what's in 104. Let me read you a statement that I think brings it home:

"Many statements have been made by various organizations and individuals concerning the consolidation of school boards. The opposition supports changes in administration but objects to the undemocratic and paternalistic way in which the government has proceeded. The third party says the government is preoccupied with the structure at the expense of equality in education. Trustees and trustee organizations have expressed concerns that with fewer trustees and larger units of administration many small municipalities will not be represented. Federations have stated that the reorganization of boards may dilute the quality of education."

If this sounds familiar, it should. Each of these statements was made in the 1968 amalgamation process, which was previously so highly disparaged. Those are the comments of Walter MacLeod. We hear this on and on again. Let's get on with improving education for the students in Ontario. Let's get 104 passed. Let's get on with amalgamation.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Premier: The people of Ontario are becoming more and more concerned about the Conservative government's trashing of environmental protection in Ontario. It's obvious this government doesn't care what I say about their attack on the environment and they don't care what environmentalists say. But today, on Earth Day, Ontario's independent Environmental Commissioner has sounded the alarm about this government's sorry environmental

record. Here's what the commissioner said today: "If we continue along this path, our right and the right of our children to a healthy environment will be jeopardized."

My question to the Premier is this: What will it take to get him to realize that his government has to stop clear-cutting the laws that protect Ontario's environment? What will it take?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As we are speaking here, the Minister of Environment is visiting with the US states to deal both with water quality and with air emissions in the border states as part of a coordinated program to deal with the environment here in Ontario and the role that we can all cooperatively play in that area.

On balance, if you look at the Environmental Commissioner's report, a report, I might add, that we welcome, a report that is quite complimentary to this government in particular and to the ministry in a number of areas, by and large complimentary —

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): What page?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): What page? Where is it complimentary?

Ms Martel: One paragraph. One sentence.

Hon Mr Harris: At the same time, though, as is the role of the Environmental Commissioner, they point out areas they want to make sure we are concerned about and that we all —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Premier. The members for London Centre and Sudbury East, come to order, please. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: It's obvious that the Premier hasn't read this report. Premier, this report has nothing good to say about your government. In fact, this is what it says in reference to your government's decisions. In reference to one decision, it says, "This decision most likely increases the risk of inadequate drinking water testing in Ontario." Drinking water, Premier — essential for human health. Then it says, "With budget and staff cuts announced in 1996, it is questionable whether MNR will be able to adequately audit and enforce the law." Then it says: "Mine closure and rehabilitation compliance staff have dropped from 18 to five. One thing is clear — cleanup costs will be passed on to the taxpayer" — from the mining industry on to the taxpayer. Then it says, "Ministries demonstrated an alarming lack of environmental vision."

Premier, do you really think the people of Ontario support your agenda of chopping environmental protection in this province, of putting the fox in charge of the environmental henhouse, of putting our province's —

The Speaker: Thank you very much, leader of the third party. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I think the public of Ontario share our concern with the environment, share our concern equally, I would say. The commitment of this government is that the legacy we leave to our children and our grandchildren and next generations — just as important as not spending their money today and balancing the books, an equal priority of this party and this government is that we not spend the environment today at the expense of our grandchildren and future generations.

We are very much committed to sustainable development. We are very much committed to channelling our

environment resources where they can do some good. I might add, since you mention the Environmental Commissioner, she has some advice for us in some areas that we take very seriously. In other areas, she says:

"I commend the Ministry of Environment and Energy for addressing some of the technical and administrative recommendations I made in my 1994-1995 annual report.

"The environmental registry has now been tested and proven a cost-effective way to open the door to government environmental decision-making."

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Premier. Final supplementary, member for Riverdale.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Thank you, to the Premier, for pointing out that it was our government that brought in the Environmental Bill of Rights. I say to the Premier, take this report and read it. It is a devastating report. You should pay attention to its advice instead of the PR you're doing here today. It talks about the fact that all kinds of environmental changes and deregulation are going on in secret, behind closed doors, just like you're doing everything else in this government.

Premier, as the Environmental Commissioner says, the problem is that the commission last year stopped testing water supplies and has forced municipalities to pay private labs up to five times as much as the cost in the ministry labs. That means taxpayers are paying more, and it's not even a legal requirement that they're certified or accredited labs.

Premier, is this government so out of control, are you so determined to download and privatize, that you won't even take responsibility for safe drinking water?

Hon Mr Harris: Of course we do take responsibility and accountability, as do municipalities, which have quite an interest as well. Many of them, as you know, already own their own water and water treatment facilities, and they take it very seriously, and as their partners, we take it very seriously.

But I might add that while the commissioner points out some things — some of them are ongoing — some of them are complimentary and some are areas we should look at. That's the purpose of having the Environmental Commissioner.

The commissioner also says, for example, "The Ministry of Environment and Energy was the most consistently proactive in opening the door to its environmental decision-making processes." I'm just quoting from the report.

It says, re the Niagara Escarpment pits and quarries, "Together, high-quality public submissions and the ministry's commitment to consider what the public had to say made this a better decision."

"Generally the ministry's processes for posting proposed policies, acts and regulations, reviewing and considering public comments, and posting decisions were well designed."

Yes, there are some areas, and that's the purpose and the reason to have the Environmental Commissioner: to say some areas we should look at. We will look at those.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. New question, official opposition, the member for Hamilton East.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm standing and you're standing, and one of us is out of order. The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier as well. Premier, if you had read the report, rather than the whiz kids in your office picking out two or three quotes, you would clearly realize that this is nothing more than a brutal indictment of your record as Premier and your minister's record with regard to protecting the environment.

You have compromised the quality of drinking water in Ontario with your cuts. You have compromised environmental standards in air emissions across Ontario with your cuts. You have abandoned your commitment to the Niagara Escarpment Commission with your cuts. You have made moves that have set environmental standards in this province back 20 years in your continued obsession for this tax cut to your rich friends.

Let me read something you said on June 5, 1995. "I don't think you'll find a cent there cut out of the environment," he said. 'We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts without cutting the environment.'" Premier, those are your words, not mine, not the opposition's.

The Speaker: Your question?

Mr Agostino: Premier, can you tell the House why you've betrayed the people of Ontario and broken this promise and clear commitment you made not to cut one cent out of the environment?

Hon Mr Harris: As I recall, we said we would look for efficiencies within the operation and administration, not anything that would affect the environment. Let me give you some of the things we've been able to do with the dollars available to us that are in fact improving protection to the environment, which is our goal.

1420

We released new landfill standards, including requirements for siting, design operation, monitoring, protecting ground and surface waters, controlling landfill gas, continuously planning financial assurance. Those clearly defined standards are among the toughest in the world, and neither the Liberal government nor the NDP government had the guts to go on the record and set those tough standards.

We've undertaken a comprehensive updating of environmental legislation. We've introduced administrative changes to five acts to replace outdated language, obsolete requirements, outdated methods of serving orders.

We are putting our dollars to actually protecting and improving and cleaning up the environment and we will continue to live up to those commitments.

Mr Agostino: The Premier obviously doesn't remember everything he said. I'm going to remind him again: On June 5, Premier, you said, "I don't think you'll find a cent cut out of the environment."

Let me remind you what you've done since that time. You have cut, not one cent, but \$111 million out of the Ministry of the Environment's budget. That is the largest percentage cut to any ministry since you have become Premier of Ontario: \$111 million, when you promised you weren't going to cut one cent. That was the promise you made on June 5.

You have cut 725 jobs, or 31% of the workforce of the Ministry of the Environment. You have done that when you promised you weren't going to cut one cent. It is

very clear what you have done: You have lowered the standards. You have basically turned over control of the Ministry of the Environment to the private sector, turned over control that is going to take us back 20 years.

Can you explain to the House again why you made the commitment in June 1995 that you weren't going to cut one cent, but you have since then cut \$111 million?

Hon Mr Harris: We committed that we would not cut one cent from dollars going to protect the environment, but if there's waste we cut the waste, and we are reducing that waste. At the same time —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Other things we've done: We've introduced and passed Bill 76, An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act. We've submitted Ontario's voluntary challenge and registry program to the federal Minister of Natural Resources, producing a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2000.

I'll tell you something that is very different. I could read off the list of things we've done. We measure success in the environment by results. You measured it by how many dollars you could waste. Instead of how many dollars you waste, we measure success by results, and we will stand on that record of results of protecting the environment.

NURSING STAFF

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is also for the Premier. Today 15 nurses from Mount Sinai Hospital tried to meet with you to explain the impact of your government's budget cuts on patient care in their hospital. You, as I understand is usual, refused to meet with these front-line workers, so they're here in the members' gallery and they want to hear your answers to the questions.

Premier, 94 nurses were laid off today from Mount Sinai Hospital. That's almost 20% of the nursing staff. Already the number of patients to each nurse has jumped from three to four. These nurses are deeply concerned about the impact of these cuts on the quality of patient care. Not only do they have more patients because there are fewer of them, but these patients need a higher level of care because of the shortness of their hospital stays.

Premier, you need to understand these layoffs have nothing to do with hospital restructuring in Metro. They are the direct result of your government's budget cuts, \$6 million of budget cuts to Mount Sinai this year. Are you going to tell these nurses when you're going to step in and restore patient care in their hospital and in this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Health is, yes.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for the question, because indeed during this period of transition and restructuring in our health care system, the nurses and the front-line workers need all of our understanding. That's why we're putting millions of dollars into retraining programs.

An astonishing press release on March 12 said, "Survey Points Towards Increased Employment Opportunities for...Nurses." That's put out by the arm's-length College of Nurses of Ontario and it says:

"A recent survey undertaken by the College of Nurses of Ontario among its 111,179 members predicts that the province of Ontario will face a shortage of nurses at the turn of the century. According to professor Johanne Pomerleau, director of Laurentian University's school of nursing, 'The results of the survey indicate that there will be an increased demand for baccalaureate-prepared nurses in all sectors of health care after the present health restructuring is completed.'"

With the \$170 million that we've invested in community-based care, with the \$35 million we've put into hospital-based cardiac care —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister of Health.

Mrs Boyd: It doesn't surprise me that the Premier wouldn't answer the question. It's very clear that the minister is an apologist for his government. He knows that he's taken \$800 million out of hospital budgets and that's resulted in 5,000 nurses losing their jobs, and it's scant comfort to those nurses to know that three years from now there may be an oversupply. Why? Because they've left the field? Because these nurses whom we've trained through our education dollars, who have a commitment to their patients and a commitment to their community, are having their careers destroyed by your indiscriminate budget cuts that are coming at a time when what we need is a careful plan to restructure this system, a plan which in fact ensures that quality of patient care is there.

When are you going to accept responsibility for the fact that your budget cuts are causing real problems for patients and you're refusing to listen to the experts who are telling you what their observation is about the deterioration in patient care?

Hon Mr Wilson: I've had seven years in my place in this House listening to nurses, and nurses, through their own advertising campaign, say there's waste in the hospitals that has to be addressed, that every dollar has to be put into front-line patient care. The College of Nurses of Ontario, at arm's length, says that in a few years there will be a shortage of nurses because of the tremendous reinvestments.

The Premier made a \$42-million announcement last week on children in this province. That creates 200 nursing jobs for public health nurses. Cardiac nurses are working Saturdays and Sundays now to try and get us the lowest waiting list in the Ontario; 4,400 new jobs are being created in the community sector through the investment of \$170 million, the largest single investment in the history of Ontario.

The health care budget is up \$300 million this year, and during the five years that honourable member was in office, 14,000 nurses were laid off and went through the health services training and adjustment program — 14,000 nurses, no vision for health care, \$100 million —

The Speaker: Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

New question, the member for York East.

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'd like to bring some more good news to the attention of our friends opposite. My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. You're aware of my interest in the needs of children in this province. In fact, together with me, you have met personally with a number of the dedicated child care workers in my riding, something I appreciate very much, as I know they do as well. Just last week you announced you would be giving funding to continue the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program. I wonder if you might explain to this House why you decided to continue that particular project.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you very much, to the member, for the question. We have recognized that the research and the support the Better Beginnings program is putting forward has been supporting 4,000 families in eight low-income neighbourhoods and communities around the province. It is demonstrating that the kind of support it puts in place for low-income families actually does show a decrease in crime, actually does show a decrease in child abuse, and for that reason we felt it was appropriate to take it from a pilot project that was destined to end this year to regular full-time funding, because we think the program should continue.

I'd also like to note that this spending has also supported 1,000 hours per month of volunteers who help in these community programs.

Mr Parker: Minister, you mentioned there's a home visiting component to that program. I also know that last week you, the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education together announced there would be money for the healthy babies program. That program also does home visits. Isn't there an overlap between the two programs?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again a very good question. The healthy babies announcement that was done last week — I think one of the things that's important to note about that announcement the Premier made was that the ministries of health, education and community and social services are working at trying to integrate our funding and our programs to better serve the vulnerable people who need the help.

The healthy babies program, as my colleague the Minister of Health mentioned, is a screening program using public health nurses and other support workers to go out and screen some of the 150,000 newborns, where as the Better Beginnings is a community program that is supporting families in low-income neighbourhoods. Both programs, we know, will work very well to help us improve intervention and prevention services for children in Ontario.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and the subject is Ipperwash

and the shooting death of aboriginal Dudley George. This is really to the heart of the matter, and that is your role in this affair.

We've now had from you two versions of your role in it. One version is you have said to us that you have no files, no records because, "We had no involvement." "At no time...was there any direction given by any political staff or any politicians as to what the OPP should do...." That's what you said in the House.

We now have had another version released publicly and that is the minutes of the meeting that took place the day before the shooting. I might add that attending that meeting was an elected Conservative member, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, the Premier's executive assistant, and a senior OPP officer who was acting as a liaison between this meeting and the police. What the minutes say is that the province has taken the decision — the specific words are, "The province will take steps to remove the occupiers as soon as possible." In other words, the minutes say, "We've already taken the decision; get them out." It goes on to say, "The OPP will have the discretion only as to how to proceed to get them out."

My question to you is this, Premier —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'm sorry, time's up. Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we have to be very careful. There is a court case that is there. It's before the courts and I think we need to respect that; at least I think reasonable people would want to respect that.

We've been very clear: Absolutely no political direction was given to the OPP. Any briefings any of my staff attended would get a report from the OPP as to status. Any action that was taken by the government as a result of any of those meetings that would require action was to seek an injunction. That's a matter of public record and I don't think I'm affecting the court case by indicating that was the action the government was taking.

How anything was to be carried out I think has been confirmed by the OPP. There was no direction. There were no meetings to give any direction. We were not wanting to give any direction. It was not our role to give any direction, and I don't think you'll find any record of any direction because there was none.

Mr Phillips: I would say in terms of jeopardizing the court case, Premier, the day the court case opened, that very day, April 1, the headline was, "'Ipperwash group was breaking the law,' Premier says." You had your mouth all over this case on April 1, the day it opened.

In your own minutes it's clear you made the order: "Get them out of the park as soon as possible." It then goes on to say that the police will be allowed to determine how to get them out but not whether to. The police wanted to negotiate this. They wanted a peaceful settlement, it was clear. I've read Commissioner O'Grady's remarks very clearly. He says, "Yes, the government didn't give us tactical advice, they gave us," what he calls, "broad policy direction." In other words, the direction was, the senior OPP officer at that meeting, your executive assistant — by the way, the minutes say to report back to you the results of this meeting. That meeting said, "Get them out of the park as soon as

possible," and it instructed the OPP to move forward on that. It says the decision on how will be left to them.

The question for you is, you've now given us two different versions of this. Will you agree to a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of this matter and find out specifically —

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I just want to be clear. The member is quoted as saying in his question that he has a minute that says the OPP were instructed. That is not true. You do not have a minute that says that. The OPP were never instructed. There was no direction given to the OPP, and I suggest you may want to withdraw that at the appropriate time.

I will tell you this: What we took action on as a government is a matter of public record. We felt there was an illegal occupation. We said so publicly. We as well took the action that is a matter of public record to seek a court injunction. That is the action the government took. There was no direction given to the OPP before, after or during any other situation; no direction given by the government, no direction given by any of our staff, no direction given by any of the ministers. We said all along that is it.

I would suggest to the member that you may want to review very carefully the information you lay before this Legislature, because it is false and untrue.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Repeat it outside, Gerry. Go ahead.

The Speaker: Order. I know the rules, the member from Ottawa. I understand. Premier, you must withdraw "it is false and untrue."

Hon Mr Harris: Done. Withdrawn.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Premier. Premier, on March 6, you said in response to a question from me that all of Women's College Hospital's programs, staff, administration would be moved to Sunnybrook hospital. In addition, you said the programs of Women's College would be augmented by another \$10 million. You said, "We on our side will suggest we're in favour of enhancing the programs and the services provided by Women's College Hospital, including maintaining the name and the programs and the staff and enhancing them."

That is not what the commission recommended, and we now have a letter to the chair of the commission from your government indicating support for the commission's recommendation to close Women's College, to lose the independence of the board, to lose its funding and its independent programs.

Premier, which is it? Are you concerned about the future of women's health or are you going to allow your government to proceed with closing down and destroying 86 years of excellence and innovation at Women's College Hospital? Which is it? You can't have it both ways.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Health —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The comments the honourable member uses to quote the minister are what the commission — I'd ask the honourable member to read the commission's report again. The commission has directed that all programs delivered today by Women's College be maintained and enhanced. They have directed that the programs move to a new building which has been built for those purposes, C wing at Sunnybrook hospital, replacing an 86-year-old building downtown.

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In our response, we've also picked up on what the commission has recommended in terms of a sexual assault clinic to be located downtown, in terms of ambulatory care services for women to be located downtown. Those are our suggestions as part of this process. I know the minister for women's issues has made similar suggestions to the commission.

I'd like to know what the opposition parties said to the commission, because that seems to be the greatest secret in this province right now. What did your submission say to the commission?

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Churley: I am shocked that the Premier would not answer my question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, you seem to come in right at the very end when you're the only noticeable voice. Thank you.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): You can't hear me.

The Speaker: I do hear you. Even when you're almost beneath the desk, I still hear you. Supplementary, the member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: To the Minister of Health, I'm disappointed that the Premier didn't answer, because they were his words I was quoting. But I want to guarantee the Minister of Health that what the Premier said in this House and what is said in this letter, which I have a copy of, is completely different. It says various things. For example, it uses the phrase "the Ministry of Health supports"; it says, "the government supports"; it says, "I support"; it says, "we support" all over the place, and it's then signed by an ADM on behalf of the deputy minister. In addition, we know what the Premier said. He said, "We are in favour of expanding Women's College. You" — whoever — "have made your opinions known on this."

By your own actions, your political house is one of straw. You have intervened where it is politically suitable, in the case of rural hospitals, and you have now intervened in the case of Montfort Hospital in Ottawa. A letter from the ministry is the same as a letter from you and a letter telling Duncan Sinclair what to do.

Minister, will you commit therefore today to stand up for women's health and write a letter to the commission and ask him to keep Women's College —

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: On March 8, the scientist at Women's College, in a Toronto Star article, pointed out that the \$10 million that the commission is recommending — that's 10 million new dollars — be earmarked annually for research on women's health "would repre-

sent a significant improvement' said Cecil Yip, vice-dean of research in the school's medical faculty.

"You are seeing an expansion in terms of research on women's health," Yip said.

"It's about five times the amount they have ongoing there (at Women's College) right now. It will be really boosted in terms of women's health research."

If you don't believe the government and you don't believe our sincere efforts and the commission's sincere efforts to improve women's health in this province, maybe you'll believe the vice-president of research at Women's College itself, who says it's five times more to spend on research than they're currently able to do today; it's an improvement to women's health services in this province.

Ms Churley: It's pretty clear —

The Speaker: Member for Riverdale, come to order.

Ms Churley: I was answering the Premier.

The Speaker: No. You ask the questions; they answer them. It's that way.

Ms Churley: But they don't answer them.

The Speaker: Order, member for Riverdale. The member for Scarborough Centre.

AGRIFOOD SAFETY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I stand in my place today as an urban member to ask a question of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs regarding our outstanding agri-food industry. While the agrifood industry may be primarily located in rural Ontario, it affects every Ontarian, urban and rural.

As you know, Minister, the Canadian Environmental Law Association recently released a report stating that there are toxins in Canadian produce and meat. I know that our agrifood industry is the best. What can I tell my constituents, urban constituents in Scarborough Centre, about this report? Will you assure those who have read the report that our food is safe?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague for that question. It's my understanding that this report was put together from a hodgepodge of research that was done over the past and had no new studies at all. I can assure the people of Ontario and my colleague from the city that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, along with the federal government, is making sure that the safety of our agrifood products is number one.

In fact, a 1994 food inspection report established that 99.73% — that's a pretty precise figure — was absolutely safe for consumption. Our importers of Canadian and Ontario food products know the quality that we have, and sometimes it's a well-kept secret. I support the best environmentalists that we have. They are the food producers and the farmers of this province.

Mr Newman: I appreciate the minister's response to my question. As a supplementary question of the same minister, today is Earth Day. Is it not important to

recognize the valuable service provided by Ontario's farmers with respect to the environment?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: On Earth Day I am proud to tell you that, again, the best environmentalists are our food producers. They are the best stewards of our land. I'll tell you, if the Canadian Environmental Law Association —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): And who are they?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Apparently they're legal people, and I'll take the farmers' word over lawyers' any time at all.

UNIVERSITY LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Minister of Education regarding the strike at York University, if you'll pay attention to me. On March 20, a strike began at York University. Thirty-three days now have passed. The silence in your government is deafening. You're the minister responsible for colleges and universities. What are you doing to facilitate the end to this crisis you have created?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Scarborough North for bringing this matter to my attention today. Obviously we have been monitoring very carefully the situation at York because there are a number of students who have had their education interrupted. They've had some of their future goals interrupted. Many of those students are looking forward to summer work to help support their education. Many others are looking to get entrance into graduate programs both in Ontario and in other jurisdictions, and they need to have their marks.

I have talked to faculty at York. I have talked to the administration at York about how they might overcome the hurdle they have in front of them in order to reach an agreement that both parties can live with. I know there has been in the last few days some movement from both sides looking for an agreement. I, like everyone else in this chamber, encourage both parties to work together in the interests of the students and, frankly, in the interests of the future of the province.

We continue to monitor; we will continue to watch it very carefully. If there is a moment where my intervention can be of some assistance to those two parties, I will be more than happy to put in whatever effort I can.

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PETITIONS

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition signed by 132,000 people opposing the closure of Montfort and it reads as follows:

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de la restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort ;

«Attendu que l'hôpital Montfort joue un rôle à la grandeur de la province pour les francophones de l'Onta-

rio en desservant non seulement la population de l'est mais également celle du nord ;

«Attendu que nous perdons le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de développement des professionnels de la santé uniquement en français en Ontario ;

«Attendu que la recommandation ne tient pas compte que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans le bassin de service de Montfort ;

«Attendu que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé le site actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

I will affix my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we are concerned about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to the petition.

HIGHWAY FINANCING

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I would like to present a petition on behalf of some of the constituents of my riding of Bruce. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario established the gasoline sales tax to pay for future construction of highways and bridges and for ongoing maintenance to maintain a safe transportation system within the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the provincial government is transferring ownership of recognized provincial highways and bridges to local municipalities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is cutting transfer payments for provincial highways through smaller towns and villages normally called connecting links;

"Therefore we, the council of the town of Port Elgin, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To fully disclose all moneys derived from the gasoline sales tax to all affected municipalities, and to provide to all affected municipalities that are to be given care, control and maintenance of these highways and bridges the appropriate ratio of funding from the gasoline sales tax."

I'd like to affix my name to the top of the petition.

RESTRUCTURATION DES MUNICIPALITÉS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition qui vient de 13 écoles élémentaires catholiques de Prescott et Russell.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario se propose de changer entièrement la structure de relations entre la province et les municipalités sans avoir consulté la population de l'Ontario ; et

«Que cette restructuration propose de transférer aux municipalité le coût des services de transport et des services sociaux essentiels tels que l'aide sociale et les soins de longue durée à l'intention des personnes âgées et des personnes atteintes d'une maladie chronique ; et

«Enlève aux conseils scolaires leur habilité à lever des impôts, éliminant ainsi tout pouvoir de contrôle réel sur les écoles et les programmes scolaires ; et

«Que par ces mesures le gouvernement manque à son engagement de garantir les niveaux de financement actuels et ne reconnaît pas que les diverses collectivités locales n'ont pas les mêmes moyens de faire face à ces nouveaux fardeaux, créant ainsi une inégalité d'accès aux services essentiels ; et

«Considérant que le gouvernement ne manifeste pas l'intérêt pour une consultation réelle du public, qu'il ne prend pas en compte les réactions du public et qu'il constitue ainsi une grave menace pour la démocratie ;

«Nous, les soussignés résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario, parce que nous nous soucions de la qualité de vie dans notre province et du bien-être de nos enfants, de nos voisins, de nos voisines et de nos communautés, déposons par la présente un vote de non-confiance à l'endroit du gouvernement de la province de l'Ontario.»

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition that is signed by over 6,000 citizens of London in support of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 190. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose the provisions provided for in Bill 104 in which the Education Improvement Commission, which is an appointed, not elected, body will conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards; and

"Whereas this will adversely affect students, school safety and building cleanliness;

"Therefore, be it resolved that Bill 104 in its present form is not acceptable to the citizens of Ontario and we demand the right to maintain in-house, non-instructional services in our school boards."

I am proud to affix my signature in support of this petition.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario. It's signed by more than 500 signatures. I'd like to read the petition:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario that the residents of the city of Barrie do not want a charity permanent casino and video lottery terminals located in the city of Barrie."

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas improper catch and release methods of sport fishing have a long-lasting effect on any given body of water; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing netting during spawning season, which destroys spawning beds; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is not encouraging proper management of fish stocks by allowing any size of fish to be retained; and

"Whereas sport fishing of Lancaster perch and other breeds in greater Cornwall greatly benefit local tourism, fishing and the overall economy and will continue to do so if managed properly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Ministry of Natural Resources to impose a seven-inch size limit on fish allowed to be kept, not allow netting during spawning season and also to reopen the provincial parks in the area to encourage tourism and ensure a vibrant long-term sports fishing area in our part of eastern Ontario."

I also have affixed my signature, and it's signed by 328 residents.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by 476 residents of Etobicoke. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are residents of Etobicoke who hold of major importance the education of the young people of Ontario;

"Whereas we are committed that the control and accountability of the education system and the determination of educational priorities remain at the local level;

"Whereas we hold that Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, 1997, completely disregards the rights and opinions of the people of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel that the Education Improvement Commission is being given sweeping powers that not only make it unaccountable for its actions but also place it and its members above the law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel the proposed legislation to disband local boards of education; cancel all plans to take away from local boards of education public accountability, determination of educational priorities, and the power to raise education taxes through property taxes; and to disband the Education Improvement Commission with its arbitrary powers immediately in order to restore to this province the true democracy that the people of Ontario hold so dear."

I support the petition, and I affix my name thereto.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition, and unlike some of my colleagues, I'll comply with the standing orders and summarize the petition rather than reading it. This petition is concerned with some of the attempts by our government to amend legislation, particularly with respect to municipalities and school boards, and questions confidence in the government of the province of Ontario. It's signed by approximately 227 of my constituents and I believe it's in order. I'll sign it today.

1500

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): "Whereas Mike Harris and John Snobelen promised to give Ontario students a better education and to make the education system more accountable; and

"Whereas there is nothing in Bill 104 or in prior bills to indicate how or whether the education of Ontario's students will improve; and

"Whereas Bill 104 severely undermines an important level of local, democratically elected representation; and

"Whereas Bill 104 allows the government to appoint an Education Improvement Commission with sweeping powers that reports to the Minister of Education; and

"Whereas the fact that Bill 104 states that decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are 'final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court' indicates a severe lack of regard for democracy; and

"Whereas the radical change to the structure of the education system called for in Bill 104 and the undue speed with which the government is attempting to pass and implement Bill 104 indicate a severe lack of regard for democracy; and

"Whereas democracy is the system that makes government accountable,

"We, the undersigned, demand that the government withdraw Bill 104."

I affix my signature to this petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition from all across the province, including Elliot Lake, Sudbury, Espanola, Dryden, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns in violent crimes; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for the compulsory registration of all firearms."

I sign my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

It is clearly signed by literally hundreds of Ontario residents and I've affixed my signature in full agreement.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition for the Minister of Labour and to the chair of the WCB. It reads as follows:

"We are deeply disturbed at the news that the WCB's appeal system will lose its independence on June 2, 1997. Appeals are very important. Justice will not be served by this move. It is astounding that such a dramatic change could be initiated without public consultation and with no public announcement. Keep the WCB appeal system independent."

It's signed by, I would say, almost 100 injured workers in the city of Toronto.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs on pre-budget consultation, 1997, and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Chudleigh: Not at this time, thank you, Mr Speaker, but I move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House the motion carry? Is it agreed? It is agreed. That is carried.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Welland-Thorold has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning the family support plan. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Riverdale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning

the Environmental Commissioner's report. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 126, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les médecins.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the wish of this House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): Mr Speaker, am I not entitled to a brief statement?

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Wilson Heights for a statement.

Mr Kwinter: This bill ensures that physicians who provide non-traditional therapies or alternative forms of medicine are not found guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence unless there is evidence that proves that the therapy poses a greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or prevailing practice.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or the order of the House dated February 6, 1997 relating to Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the order for committee of the whole House be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading;

And that one sessional day be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of that sessional day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment.

In the case of any divisions relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division pursuant to standing order 28(g) shall be permitted.

1510

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 16.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As I indicated earlier today, we intended to raise with you a point of order related to the government House leader moving this motion. It's our contention that

the motion should be ruled out of order. I've already submitted opinions to you and I will put them on the record.

In our view, this motion is out of order for two reasons: First, it violates a very fundamental right of all members of the House to move amendments to public bills; second, our standing orders do not permit such a motion to be debated.

On February 6, 1997, this House passed a motion allocating time for the standing committee, the committee of the whole House and third reading stages of Bill 104. Our party objected to that motion and voted against it, but the government's motion was within the rules of the Legislature. The motion very clearly stated that committee of the whole House consideration would take place. The motion stated that the deadline for submitting amendments for committee of the whole consideration was 2 pm on the day the bill was called for committee of the whole House debate.

The sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms says, "The function of a committee on a bill is to go through the text of the bill clause by clause and, if necessary, word by word, with a view to making such amendments in it as may seem likely to render it more generally acceptable." That's from the sixth edition, page 205.

Parliamentary practice and our standing orders give members the right to move motions at either a standing committee stage or committee of the whole House stage. You will recall that on Bill 103 the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing used that right to move substantive amendments at the committee of the whole House stage, after choosing not to move a single amendment at the standing committee.

With regard to Bill 104, our caucus decided to adopt a similar approach. Wednesday, April 2, was to be the first day that the committee of the whole House consideration of Bill 104 appeared on the daily business sheet, so we submitted our amendments around 1 pm that day and shared our amendments with the other parties in the assembly. Now it appears that the government intends to amend the assembly's time allocation motion to deny members the opportunity to amend the bill at the committee of the whole House stage.

Our caucus and the official opposition caucus are being denied the right to move amendments to this very important bill, amendments which we might have moved at the standing committee stage had we known the government was planning to amend the order of the House.

I would point out that the amendments we intend to bring before the House, before the committee, are based on submissions that were made in the hearings across the province at the standing committee stage.

The proposed amendment from the government raises very serious concerns with regard to the process in this House. Think for a moment about how a government could abuse its ability to amend time allocation motions to retroactively change the deadline for submitting amendments. The result would be that one party in the assembly would know the deadline for submitting amendments and the other two parties would not. Surely this is not acceptable.

It seems only fair that if the government insists on not proceeding with committee of the whole House consideration of the bill, the bill be ordered back to standing committee, to ensure that our right to amend the legislation is not eliminated.

According to Beauchesne, "The Speaker may make alterations to proposed motions or may refer them back to the member for correction" — sixth edition, page 50. I suggest that you would be perfectly in order to make such an alteration to this motion or rule it out of order entirely.

I would also submit that the consideration of such a motion is contrary to the rules of this assembly and to parliamentary convention. Standing order 51 reads as follows: "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session." This assembly has already decided how it wishes to proceed with this piece of legislation and time allocation. It's already been decided.

The sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms contains the following reference: "An old rule of Parliament reads that a question being once made and carried in the affirmative or negative cannot be questioned again but must stand as the judgement of the House. Unless such a rule were in existence, the time of the House might be used in discussion of a motion of the same nature and contradictory decisions would be sometimes arrived at in the course of the same session."

There is precedent in this assembly for a motion being ruled out of order because the House had already reached a decision on a similar motion. On October 28, 1982, the then Speaker of the assembly ruled that a motion moved by Mr Peterson, the member for London Centre, was out of order because the matter had already been debated and voted on by the Legislature in that very session. At that time, the Speaker quoted standing orders of the assembly as well as Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, as well as Beauchesne. I refer you to Hansard, page 4651, October 28, 1982, where the Speaker made that ruling.

For these reasons, Speaker, I suggest you rule this motion out of order.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I think a compelling case has probably been made this afternoon for ruling this motion out of order. I'm sorry to pre-empt the government House leader, who I thought was going to rise and agree with that.

The motion does not allow the opportunity for anyone in this House from any of the parties to submit amendments in committee of the whole. While the committee process itself allowed for the opportunity to submit and have voted upon certain amendments, and that indeed was done, there were representations made by hundreds of groups and organizations and individuals, and perhaps thousands of written submissions, that were heard by the various parties and by the committee. Those who wanted to see some of these submissions reflected in amendments will not be able to do so today, because the government wishes to cut off the option to present amendments. Our party had a significant number of amendments which we wished to put forward in the name of the member for

Fort William, the Ontario Liberal critic in the field of education.

I well recall on October 28, 1982, when Mr Peterson of the Liberal Party at that time endeavoured to bring forward a motion and have it debated and voted upon, only to be ruled out of order by the Speaker. If my memory is correct, it was Speaker Turner at the time who ruled it out of order because the topic had been debated and voted upon already in that particular session.

I think the case has been made. The government has become jittery over the process of the committee of the whole and for this reason wishes to circumvent that process. I think they're unnecessarily jittery about it, but nevertheless I understand that the government House leader feels that way. Of course I hope you will rule in favour of the submission which has been made that this motion is out of order.

The Speaker: Government House leader.

1520

Hon David Johnson: Not too surprisingly, Mr Speaker, I would submit very strongly that this motion is indeed in order. There has been a point put forward with regard to the committee of the whole process, but I think we all realize here today that the committee of the whole is not a mandatory part of the flow of any legislative proceedings. It's an optional part. It can be entertained, indeed is entertained in some situations, probably not so much in the future as in the past, given the circumstances over the last three weeks where we entertained some 12,000 amendments through committee of the whole on Bill 103.

However, I would say that of the nine bills we've had out through committee work over the past month or so, only two of them have been steered at one point in time through committee of the whole and the other seven have not been steered in that direction whatsoever.

The standing committee, as was pointed out, did meet with regard to Bill 104, did have public hearings, did entertain amendments. Indeed I might say that one of the NDP amendments was actually passed, was put before the standing committee and was passed. That amendment dealt with an amendment to allow students to be represented on school boards. There is a specific example of an amendment put forward by the third party which was entertained through the standing committee and it's currently now part of the bill; it was approved. So amendments have been entertained by all parties and some have been passed and some have not been passed.

I don't believe there's any provision to order this bill back to a standing committee. I think it's in order to rule whether this particular motion is in order or not, obviously, but I submit it would not be the proper course of action to send this back to committee where it has already received great attention through the standing committee — many hours, many amendments considered.

In terms of standing order 51, which is the other aspect that is being put before us today, I think it's clear and the practice has been clear that the rationale and application of standing order 51 has always been applied to the governance of the province, not to the scheduling of legislative business. There's the important distinction and I suspect one will find that in the case of the instances

that have been put before us today, it has been applied to the governance of the province, not to the scheduling of legislative business.

I can give you for instances. For example, just last year an order of the House was made on November 28, 1996, relating to clause-by-clause deliberation of Bill 82. The November 28 motion directed all amendments which had not been moved by 5 o'clock on the date specified to have been moved. However, a superseding motion was passed on December 3, 1996, and moved that time from 5 o'clock to 8 pm. So here is a motion that was approved by this House dealing with the legislative business before this House that was agreed upon.

I can give you another example. The order of the House dated November 2, 1995, still in the same session, is superseded frequently. For example, on Thursday, December 5, 1996, I moved a motion which read as follows: "That notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 2, 1995, the standing committee on resources development be authorized to meet beyond 6 pm on Monday, December 9, 1996, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 86, An Act to provide for better local government by updating and streamlining the Municipal Elections Act, the Municipal Act and related statutes." That motion was adopted, another instance where an order of the House was superseded, and again it has to deal with the legislative business.

I would submit on both counts that the motion is in order. It is a time allocation motion. It is introduced with the phrase "notwithstanding...the order of the House dated February 6, 1997." Therefore I would also submit, based on that wording, that it is indeed even a different matter, if that's helpful. There are different circumstances. The "notwithstanding" clause does make it a different matter, as an additional point, but the practice certainly has been that the scheduling of the legislative business has been amended on numerous occasions in the past.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I would like to speak to both points that have been raised. Let me first begin with standing order 51. I'd like to talk about the precedent that has been set in this Legislature, the actual ruling that was made, because I believe you've indicated on a number of occasions that is the first place we look to, the standing orders and the rulings that have been made with respect to those standing orders.

In the ruling my colleague the member for Algoma referred to of October 28, 1982, the Speaker, upon reviewing the motion that had been put by Mr Peterson at the time, directed the attention of the members of the Legislative Assembly to standing order 39 at the time. I would point out to you that the content and reading is identical to our current standing order 51. Through rule changes, there has been a renumbering, but the content is exactly the same. He goes on to spell that out, that it reads, "No motion, or amendment, the subject matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session."

He makes some specific references; first of all, to Lewis on page 39, which says, "Any matter which has been the subject of a motion or amendment decided in the House cannot again be brought forward during the same session."

He refers then to May on page 368 and quotes "Matters already decided during the same session," and states: "A motion or amendment may not be brought forward which is the same in substance as a question which has been decided in the affirmative or negative during the current session. The rule may be fully stated as follows:

"No question or bill shall be offered in either House that is substantially the same as one on which judgement has already been expressed in the current session."

Then he gives a reference from Beauchesne and says that it is substantially the same ruling and/or commentary as in May. He goes on to find, therefore, under the authority of the standing orders that in his opinion the "motion which has been offered is, indeed, contrary to the standing orders of the House."

One of the interesting points is what follows in the Hansard. Mr Nixon, who was the seconder of Mr Peterson's motion, rises to draw the Speaker's attention to the fact that while on two days within the same week a substantially identical motion had been moved, on the first day — and I don't have the date in front of me, but it was the Tuesday of that same week of October 28 — the question that had been put to the House and the question that was decided was a motion of, "Shall the debate proceed?" He points out that in fact the meaning of that question is, "Should the debate proceed on that day?" There was a division and there was a vote on that, and the government majority at that point in time voted in the negative, that the debate should not proceed.

He put to the Speaker therefore that there was a very different substantive issue. It was not the amendment itself which had been decided on but a procedural matter, which was "Should the debate proceed?"

The interesting thing here is that the Speaker, in having reviewed this, says, "I think, with all respect, I am bound by the rules of the House and my interpretation thereof. I have explained that..." and maintains his ruling.

So the substance was similar but the motion that had been put forward on day one of the House entertaining this particular motion, the question that was put to the House, was very different but it dealt with substantially the same subject matter. The Speaker found in that case that his ruling was applicable and maintained his ruling.

They then went on in the House to seek unanimous consent to actually deal with the same substantive motion, and in fact the House granted unanimous consent and the debate proceeded along those lines.

I think that's a really important point, because the types of procedural motions that the government House leader has referred to as precedents in this House, which have, for example, extended times of sittings of committees or added days of sittings of committees, are ones which have had the consent of the House to be dealt with. In fact, in both the situations the government House leader cited, they flow from agreements of House leaders with respect to the handling of the business of the House. That's a very different circumstance than what we see here before us today.

1530

The motion that is before us today is one which, when you cut away all the language, comes down to saying that the order for committee of the whole House be dis-

charged. That's the key essence, the intent of the motion. The motion is attempting to bypass the committee of the whole process.

The minister has spoken to the fact that the committee of the whole process is not mandatory, that it is optional. I'd point out to him, so is committee stage. These things are decided along the course of dealing with a bill. In this case, I would point out to him that should this motion not be dealt with and passed today, in fact committee of the whole is mandatory because it was passed in a time allocation motion by this Legislative Assembly.

Section 46(a) of our current standing orders is the section that deals with time allocation. It indicates: "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or substantive government motion." The motion itself, the time allocation motion, the content of the motion is to time-allocate the bill.

Mr Speaker, on February 6 such a motion was put before this Legislative Assembly, was debated and was decided upon. The motion we have before us today is of the same substance: a time allocation motion. I would put to you that it is particularly with respect to the issue of committee of the whole House that you must determine that this matter has already been decided.

On February 6 the motion that was put before us had a process for dealing with committee of the whole which involved an hour of proceedings and review and debate and questions and answers on amendments, after which all outstanding amendments deemed to be moved must be read in and then must be voted on. That question of how committee of the whole House should be handled with respect to Bill 104 has been debated and been decided by this Legislative Assembly. The intent and substance of the motion here before us today, which is in its effect to discharge the committee of the whole House, is dealing with the same subject matter that this Legislative Assembly has already decided.

I step back to the first argument that my colleague from Algoma put forward to you, which was one about whether it can be in order for the government at this stage in the process to move a motion to change the rules of the game, essentially.

I want to combine these two arguments now, Mr Speaker, and say to you that I believe very strongly in your role as safeguard of the rights of the minority in the House. You must look to what the practical effect of a finding that this motion is in order would have.

My colleague presented to you a scenario where, after amendments had been filed by 1 o'clock of the day the order was to be called, pursuant to a time allocation motion of a nature like the one passed on February 6 — the opposition parties file their motions and then, two days later, the government passes a motion and says: "No. We're going to retroactively change the filing time. It's 1 o'clock the day before the matter is to be called as an order of the House."

The prejudice to the rights of the minority must be understood in that circumstance, and the finding that this kind of motion is in order could leave open that kind of circumstance.

I don't believe that the government's argument that rule 51 only applies to substantive motions or government bills is one you can find as substantive or as having any basis in our rules. Rule 51 is contained in the section on motions. There is absolutely no distinction with respect to whether this is dealing with a motion, a bill or a substantive motion. Clearly, whether it be procedural or whether it be substantive or whether it be a bill, the rule says that if a question has been put and has been decided in the affirmative or the negative by this Legislature, it may not be put again without perhaps unanimous consent, and we have seen occasions on which that unanimous consent has been given.

Mr Speaker, if you were to find that our arguments with respect to standing order 51 were not arguments that would lead you to rule this motion out of order, I believe you still have a role with respect to the protection of the rights of the minority.

In this case, I want to point out to you the sequence in time of what has occurred. Had the government indicated prior to the standing committee stage that it intended to change the rules and to eliminate the committee of the whole, the opposition parties would have been made aware of that and would have had an opportunity to submit any further amendments at the standing committee stage.

But that's not what occurred. The opposition parties were led to believe that the government would proceed as had been set out in the time allocation motion passed by this Legislative Assembly and that there would be two opportunities on which to deal with amendments to this piece of legislation. It does not matter whether in other bills, the seven the minister referred to, there is committee of the whole or there is a standing committee. What we're dealing with is the instance before us, in which the opposition parties were informed of a process and were told of the rules the process would follow and would be governed by and acted according to those rules.

The prejudice to the members of the opposition and the minority, who did not have the knowledge that the government would change the rules some time down the road and did not therefore submit all substantive amendments at the standing committee stage, is great if you should at this point in time allow the government to proceed with this retroactive changing of the rules.

I suggest to you that our submissions on standing order 51 are very strong, and I hope that on that basis you will rule this out of order. But second to that, if you do not, I hope you would take the suggestion of the member for Algoma that you, as Speaker, have discretion and that you have the ability to direct the mover of the motion and/or to find a resolve to this, which may be to direct this bill back to the standing committee so we could deal with the substantive amendments the opposition parties have put forward.

I think to find — simply that it is in order and to allow it to proceed at this point in time is a great affront to the rights of the minority for full knowledge and full participation in the process of setting legislation in this assembly.

The Speaker: The member for Fort William.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I will be very brief because I won't reiterate the points that have already

been made, but I did rise earlier to make a point which now is further to the last point made by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, although from a somewhat different perspective.

With respect to the government House leader, I would suggest that the argument that it is quite appropriate for any bill to be referred directly to third reading from standing committee and not go to committee of the whole is simply not relevant. We all know that. There are many examples of bills which are not referred to committee of the whole which do go directly to third reading. That's not the issue here.

The issue is that the government did have a time allocation motion which it brought in and which was duly passed in spite of the objections of the opposition. That motion then directed the business of the standing committee on social development in considering this bill, following both second reading and following the public consultations on the bill.

The member for Beaches-Woodbine has suggested that changing the motion now would prejudice the minority rights of the members of the opposition and the opposition members of the standing committee on social development. I would suggest, somewhat differently, that the change in this motion prejudices the work of the entire standing committee on social development, and I would make that statement in two respects.

The first is that the time for the standing committee on social development to consider amendments, to consider the input from the public consultations, was already very brief. It was to be enhanced by the admittedly very limited one hour for further debate on amendments that was to take place in committee of the whole, according to that same time allocation motion. I think it's fair to assume that if there was to have been no committee of the whole from the outset, an argument could have been made that at least that hour of further debate time could have been added to the debate time for the standing committee on social development.

Beyond that, and perhaps less theoretical, is the fact that in doing the business under the time allocation motion that was in place, the standing committee on social development unanimously made recommendations for referral of a small number of amendments to committee of the whole. Those amendments included a government amendment which was deferred and referred to committee of the whole and an opposition amendment which had received unanimous support in committee.

1540

I believe that had we had any sense that there would be no opportunity to consider those amendments in committee of the whole, they clearly would not have been referred by the standing committee on social development. There was a clear intention on the part of all members of the committee on social development to have those amendments included in the body of the bill. They related specifically to the government's concern that native representation and representatives who are on public boards representing separate school ratepayers for secondary school purposes would not be included in the limited number of trustees that constitute the elected portion of the new boards.

There was a further opposition amendment that was again approved unanimously by the social development committee to allow for student representation on the new boards. The government recognized that it would then have to change its amendment to ensure that student representatives were not part of the elected complement and therefore, because they wanted to look more carefully at the wording, they referred all those amendments to committee of the whole. It would have been very easy, if we had known that committee of the whole was not to take place, to have made the appropriate changes and have those amendments passed at the standing committee on social development. They would then be incorporated in the amended bill, as in fact the other government amendments are.

I would submit that the understanding that we were working under in the social development committee, that was directed by the government's own time allocation motion, has now been altered and that it would be most appropriate for the government now to refer those amendments at least back to the standing committee on social development so the now unfinished business of that committee could be completed.

Hon David Johnson: Simply to reiterate, it's the government's contention that because of the "notwithstanding" clause, this is in fact a different matter. What is at issue here is whether this motion is in order. That's what is at issue here today. Because of that, we view that in fact it is in order; secondly, even beyond that, it is again dealing with the scheduling of the legislative business of this House and not a matter that could be characterized as dealing with governance of the province, and I've indicated a couple of examples.

Beyond that, it's the government's position that there has been an exhaustive public hearing process involving I believe some 72 hours in half a dozen or 10 different municipalities, involving clause-by-clause consideration, involving an amendment from the opposition party which indeed was approved. Every consideration has been given to this bill. In fact, the minority rights, if you wish, have been well protected by many hours of public hearings, exhaustive debate, and the clause-by-clause amendments, all amendments, being considered. With all of that together, I would submit that this motion is well in order.

The Speaker: To the government House leader, quickly, you cited two precedents that you had earlier. There's some discussion as to whether or not they were preceded by unanimous consents. Do you have the answer to that question?

Hon David Johnson: I don't have that information. I would say, though, that they were motions that were approved by this House.

The Speaker: Okay, I appreciate that. I can pursue —
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: Just a short one: Since the government House leader has pointed to the opposition amendment which I put, which was carried in the standing committee, a couple of times, I wanted to point out, as did the member for Fort William, that while that was accepted unanimously by the standing committee, the government

then said there had to be a reordering of its amendment so that the student representative was not counted in the numbers that were set out in the bill. That was referred to the committee of the whole debate.

The Speaker: I appreciate your input, but I don't see how that is germane.

Mr Wildman: But mine was too, so when he says that the amendment was carried —

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, I appreciate that, but with the greatest respect, that really isn't germane. It's an order that we're dealing with here, and what happened at committee isn't germane.

Ms Lankin: I just wanted to stress one point, Mr Speaker. I don't have the Hansard references of the government House leader with respect to those two motions, but I can assure you with full recollection that those came forth as a result of agreement from House leaders' meetings. I do remember the subject content, and that was the way in which those motions came forward with full support from the parties.

The Speaker: I'll just recess for 20 minutes in order to research.

The House recessed from 1546 to 1622.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their submissions on this point of order.

I want to begin by dealing with the argument that the motion is out of order because it denies members the ability to make amendments to Bill 104 at committee of the whole House. In reviewing precedents on this matter, I have found many instances of similar time allocation motions. There were in fact no less than 13 time allocation motions during the 1993-94 session of this House in which no provision was made for any committee of the whole House consideration. Indeed, on July 21, 1992, Speaker Warner ruled in order a time allocation motion which allowed for no third reading debate.

My point is this: Time allocation motions by their very nature sometimes impose severe restrictions on the various stages of consideration of legislation. Sometimes those restrictions include the elimination of the legislative stage altogether. While this may be regarded as extreme by some, it does not make such a motion out of order.

As stated in the 21st edition of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, time allocation motions "may be regarded as the extreme limit to which procedure goes in affirming the rights of the majority at the expense of the minorities of the House, and it cannot be denied that they are capable of being used in such a way as to upset the balance, generally so carefully preserved, between the claims of business and the rights of debate."

I cannot find, then, that the time allocation motion moved by the government House leader today is out of order on the basis that it does not provide for any time in committee of the whole House. As I said, this is consistent with many similar motions this House has passed previously.

I want to turn to the second argument put forward, which is that the motion is out of order on the basis that it violates standing order 51. I perused with interest the precedent that the member for Algoma referred to. I think that this ruling is of questionable precedential importance

and I'm not convinced that, faced with the same situation, I would have made the same ruling. In most cases where a Speaker has ruled a motion out of order on the basis of standing order 51 it has been a substantive motion or resolution that expresses an opinion of the House or is legislation.

On the other hand, I also found numerous examples of motions that order the business of the House and its committees which were subsequently superseded by a new motion. As an example, this House often passes motions that set out the days and the times and the meetings of the standing committees. While passage of such motions results in an order of the House, the House has never felt bound that such an order is final and unchangeable. It is in the nature of a housekeeping order relating to the timetable of House business in the committees.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the original motion, our precedents abound with examples of revisions to the ordering of business at a later date. To cite two such examples, on May 18, 1983, the House, by motion and without unanimous consent, rescinded a previous order and changed the committee referral; and on April 11, 1994, the House passed a motion which authorized the standing committee on resources development to meet at times other than those specified in a previous order of the House. The House must surely retain the right to order its business as it sees fit, and indeed these examples illustrate clearly that the House always has.

Standing order 51 was meant to cover substantive motions that expressed the opinion of the House, not substantive motions dealing with how the House orders or reorders its business. Were it otherwise, members can surely appreciate that it would not have been possible for this House to from time to time pass "notwithstanding" motions that change a pre-existing arrangement to the scheduling of House business.

To look at it another way, the House adopts its standing orders by motion. If such a decision of the House were final and unchangeable, then the House would be powerless to revise its own standing orders in the future. I don't believe standing order 51 contemplates that the House should bind itself in its own housekeeping decisions. I find, then, that the motion is in order.

New point of order, the member for Algoma?

Mr Wildman: Speaker, you have ruled that this motion is in order and I accept that decision. I rise on a different point of order.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): The table wins.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Lake Nipigon, that is completely out of order.

Mr Pouliot: I withdraw. I'm sorry.

Mr Wildman: The standing orders of the Legislature place very few restrictions on the rights of members to speak to legislation and to motions, and rightly so. After all, we are all here to represent our constituents and we must be afforded the right to speak on their behalf here in the House. Motions to adjourn the House or to adjourn the debate are not debatable and the restriction on other motions comes through closure which, as you know, Speaker, gives discretion to the Chair to determine whether such a motion violates the rights of the minority.

The only other restriction on a substantive motion is made through standing order 46, which gives the government the right to allocate time on legislation or on other motions. In light of the extraordinary powers that this standing order gives to limit debate on a motion to one sessional day, I submit that any motion moved under this standing order must be carefully reviewed to determine whether it truly is the type of motion contemplated by the rules of the House. Simply prefacing the motion with the words, "Pursuant to standing order 46," is not enough.

The right to allocate time under standing order 46 has already been exercised by the government on this particular bill. Their motion of February 6, 1997, clearly fell within the boundaries of the standing order. But that standing order does not give the government the right to move and pass multiple time allocation motions on the same piece of legislation. It says, "The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time."

Speaker, you have ruled that this motion is in order. In my view, it can only be in order as a substantive motion which has been moved with notice by the government House leader, and with all the restrictions on debate which normally accompany a substantive motion. Since the rules particular to time allocation motions do not contemplate such a motion, it cannot be moved pursuant to standing order 46. Instead, this motion must be moved under standing order 48(a), which provides a broader definition of a substantive motion and gives the members of this assembly a greater ability to participate in the debate.

I believe that, upon review, you may reach a similar conclusion, Speaker, and I would ask you to consider very carefully if this is in order under standing order 48(a).

Hon David Johnson: I'll simply say that it is our view that this is a time allocation motion. As I understand it, the member opposite is saying that it may not be.

Standing order 46(c) indicates that a motion may not be moved until at least three sessional days of debate have taken place on second reading consideration. Certainly three days have taken place, indeed more than that in terms of committee work etc. Consequently, this motion qualifies in that regard in that it meets the requirements as laid out in the standing orders.

Only in standing order 46 do we see provision for time allocation, and the provisions there indicate that at least three sessional days of debate must have taken place. We have met that test. It is a time allocation motion. It meets all the tests of being a time allocation motion, and consequently it should be considered for processing in line with the process laid out for a time allocation motion, ie, one day of debate.

1630

The Speaker: I appreciate the notice you gave me on the first notice of motion, member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I thought you were going to rule it out of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

It's an interesting point you make. The difficulty I find in accepting your argument is that in 46(a) it says, "The government House leader or any minister of the crown

may move a motion." It doesn't say one motion, it doesn't say two motions, it doesn't say three; it says "a motion." So it would seem to me that a motion can be any period of time over a closure motion. Furthermore, you may have a time allocation at committee and you may also have one at third reading, and that could be two separate time allocation motions, so it would be in order then as well.

It's an unusual situation, and you make interesting arguments, but with the greatest respect to the member for Algoma, I don't think it's out of order on that basis either.

Government House leader.

Hon David Johnson: Am I now able to speak to the time allocation motion?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon David Johnson: Time is passing by, and I promise not to be too lengthy in this. We find ourselves at this juncture, having gone through a very difficult situation over the past three weeks with regard to Bill 103, which had a time allocation motion on it, with the electronic flooding of amendments, some 12,000 amendments, that in my view took advantage of a good system, a committee of the whole system that has been honoured through the years, which has not been abused through the years — though I suppose one would argue not outside the rules, I would say an abused system in that case.

We are looking here again at a system where some 2,000 to 3,000 amendments —

Mr Pouliot: No.

Hon David Johnson: Was it more than that? I guess the member opposite is indicating there were probably more than that, double or triple. There obviously is a problem in the system.

For our part, as a government, we did offer the possibility of further debate, further public hearings on Bill 103, further amendments even, on the basis that the thousands and thousands of frivolous amendments would be withdrawn, but that wasn't acceptable.

Consequently, with regard to Bill 104, we find ourselves in a similar situation, after having had in this case some 72 hours of public hearings, exhaustive proceedings, and I'm sure the members opposite had every opportunity to participate, in Windsor, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Brantford, Barrie. We were delighted to go to many fine communities, all of which had good input.

We were delighted to consider the amendments that came through from the government, amendments from the Liberal Party, amendments from the third party, even delighted that one of the amendments from the third party seemed to make sense, and we supported that and put it through, a good amendment. There were many other good amendments, particularly from the government.

It was a healthy process, with great debate, great consideration of this issue, but there comes a point in time when we have to get on with the business, because the business of this bill is important. The people of Ontario have a right to expect, through a democratic process — a democratic process they participated in in 1995, for example, an election in which this government promised to look at the education system, which is very important to the people of the province. We promised

during that election, and I hope this would be a promise whose intent would be shared by all members of this House, that we'd allocate our resources in the education system to our children, to the classroom. That's where the money should be spent, and that, I might say, is the intent behind Bill 104.

This legislation will reduce the number of school boards in the province from 129 to 66.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): What did the red book say?

Hon David Johnson: Some of my colleagues are asking, "What did the red book say?" It said our education dollars must be spent on classroom spending rather than administration. I would assume, based on that statement, that the official opposition party would agree with Bill 104. Let's put that money into the classroom rather than into administration.

Mrs McLeod: Show us the money. Show us the money first.

Mr Pouliot: Your red book was a recipe for losers. Forget the red book.

Hon David Johnson: I think it was unfair of the member opposite to say the red book is for losers, but I guess that's his opinion. They're a little rowdy today, Mr Speaker.

I will also say that Bill 104 calls for fewer politicians, and they will no longer be paid the equivalent of a full-time salary. There are many people in Metropolitan Toronto who think that the salaries, for example, of the school board representatives here in Metropolitan Toronto have gone beyond an acceptable range.

1640

Mr Baird: What does the red book say?

Hon David Johnson: My colleagues again ask, "What does the red book say about that?" It says, "A Liberal government will further cut spending on administration and get rid of waste and duplication by reducing the number of trustees, placing a cap on the salaries of trustees and recognizing the part-time nature of the job."

It's nice to know that we have support for Bill 104 because through Bill 104 we will indeed have fewer school boards, fewer trustees, there will be less cost and the salaries will be at a lower level, again recognizing this important initiative that there is a part-time nature and this is not a full-time job as a trustee.

We are further honoured to be following up on an initiative in a sense begun by both of the previous parties.

Mr Wildman: "In a sense." Heavy on that.

Hon David Johnson: Heavy on that, my friend indicates.

The former government, the NDP government, contracted with John Sweeney, a former Liberal cabinet minister, to study education. Mr Sweeney has reported and he suggested fewer school boards. We agree with that sentiment.

I'm also delighted that this bill will establish a non-partisan commission co-chaired by David Cooke and Ann Vanstone, David Cooke of course being one of the former ministers in the NDP government.

Mr Bradley: Did you go to his testimonial dinner?

Hon David Johnson: It's our hope that through this commission some of the bickering, maybe some of the

heckling that I'm experiencing at the present time, maybe the partisanship will be taken out of this whole issue, because the children are important.

We need to put in place a school system that uses to maximum advantage the money we have available for education, that takes the resources we have and focuses them in the classroom. At the end of the day, I believe that's a sentiment shared by all three parties in this House. Certainly I can say that this government agrees with that concept.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Your heart isn't in this, Dave, I can tell.

The Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Hon David Johnson: I'm told that in my lifetime there have been some 24 studies on school board governance. I don't know if they know how old I am; I suspect there are more than 24. It's time for action.

Mr Bradley: Is that what it says on there?

Hon David Johnson: It doesn't say that here.

Mr Baird: That's what it said in the red book.

Hon David Johnson: That's what it said in the red book: "It's time for action." This government is saying it's time for action, it's time for Bill 104, it's time to put the focus on our students and to get the money into the classrooms. We've had 72 hours of debate, 400 submissions to the committee, many, many amendments. I will simply leave my comments at that because I know many other people want to speak to this bill.

We've gone through a long process. It's a worthwhile process. It's called democracy. We've heard the public through the election process. We've heard the public through the public hearing process. We now have a bill, Bill 104, which I believe we need to get on with, have the third reading, get it into effect for the future of our children and the education system in Ontario.

The Speaker: I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Mr Luizinho Saleiro, minister of state for industries, labour and employment from Goa, India, as well as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Further debate? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, if it's possible, I'd request permission to share my time with the member for Fort William and the member for Windsor-Walkerville. I don't expect to use the full time, but I would like to share the time if it's permissible. If it's not possible, I'll have to give the whole speech myself.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the member for St Catharines to share his time with the member for Fort William and the member for Windsor-Walkerville? Agreed.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. If there's no dissent on that, I will proceed. Otherwise the House would be treated to only one person making a speech, and I think the viewpoints of some other members of the Liberal Party would be important as well.

We have had considerable argument so far on the legality of this particular motion. I think my friend the member for Algoma has made some arguments, which

were not accepted but were nevertheless compelling arguments, as did the member for Fort William and the member for Beaches-Woodbine. I even made an intervention myself. But the Speaker has ruled and we all respect the Speaker's ruling in this House, because we feel that he is impartial, that he takes the necessary time to consider all of the arguments and then he rules based on the precedents and based on the very good advice which he receives from the table.

Unlike some who have recriminations when the Speaker makes a ruling and are sometimes abusive in their public remarks about the Speaker, we in the official opposition, even though we may not agree with the ruling of the Speaker, are respectful of that ruling and believe that all of us in this House should be respectful of the impartial and judicious approach of our Speaker.

The problem we are confronted with in this time allocation motion is that we have a motion essentially which is going to circumvent the process of allowing for more amendments to Bill 104. The best move we believe the government could take with Bill 104, the education bill, is to withdraw the bill, go back for some further consultations, endeavour to develop a consensus in the province and then decide to move forward. Instead, in the face of compelling arguments made by a large number of groups, organizations and individuals with an interest and expertise in education, instead of listening to that and developing a consensus, the government decided to bulldoze ahead with Bill 104, bypass committee of the whole, where amendments reflecting the views put forward by the people who made representations to the committee — we think that would be a good process, I might say, if we were allowed to place those amendments.

If the government perhaps heard of some representations which merited the development of an amendment based on those representations, then we think it would be important to move forward with that through the avenue of the committee of the whole. The government for some reason is paranoid about going into committee of the whole. I can't imagine why they would be. They are aware that there are some interesting and helpful amendments available from both of the opposition parties that could be put forward in great number to assist the government in improving this legislation, which we believe is very difficult to improve upon.

The real agenda behind the legislation, the real reason the government wants to move forward with the time allocation motion as opposed to allowing considerably more debate on this particular piece of legislation, is that the government is looking for an opportunity to withdraw even further funding from education. That's the real agenda that the government wishes to do.

There are some members on the government side who think this is a good idea. Others are in full denial, but some believe this a good idea, that having already taken out about half a billion dollars from education, and fiddling with the formula to such an extent that boards of education are getting even less money than they had anticipated to carry out the responsibilities of educating our children, the government is now going to move

forward with Bill 104, take full control of education at the provincial level, virtually eliminate any opportunity at the local level to have an impact on educational issues, and move forward.

1650

I want to assure my friend the member for Algoma that we want to allow some time to the New Democratic Party to put its comments on as well. I think he noted I was moving forward in full form and perhaps was going to take the full time, but in the interests of sharing the opportunity, I want to assure him that there will be some time for New Democrats to speak as well.

This bill fits in with the general attitude that people have towards this government: that it's moving too quickly, too drastically, and not looking at the consequences of its actions. In other words, it wants to do things rapidly instead of doing them right. Unfortunately, this is not the usual cautious, careful, prudent approach we have come to expect from previous Conservative governments when Premier Robarts and Premier Davis, both with strong interests in education, moved forward with educational reforms but in such a fashion as to allow for full consultation and an opportunity to develop some consensus. Instead we have the Reform Party in power. We have the extreme right wing of the Conservative Party obviously in control of the Conservative government.

Some of the moderates, I note, have been deposed. My friend the whip of the Liberal party, the member for Kingston and The Islands, I know has a list of these individuals who have been deposed from the government. He's going to bring it to me in just a moment, if he has not already returned it to me. This list is people who are prepared to speak out against the government. I have to share what they had to say. I'm sorry I have to share it, but I do have to share what they had to say.

First of all, there is a report which has come in. I want to list the people, all fine in my view, who have been, as I say, demoted. Why, I don't know.

"Gary Carr publicly complained when he didn't make cabinet but was given a chance as a PA anyway. Then he publicly complained about municipal reform. Adios, amigo," it says in a publication put out by some group or organization. Gary Carr, I think, is known as one of the more moderate members of the Conservative caucus. I have known him since 1990, when he was elected to the House. I've always held him in very high regard. I think my fellow members of the House will as well. He is not an ideologue. He is not one who worships at the feet of Newt Gingrich and the Republicans in New Jersey and Michigan and Mississippi and wherever else you can find them. He is not a person who heads down to the Republican conventions to ensure that they are keeping up with Republican thought. I think Mr Carr is an individual for whom many people, particularly the people of Oakville South, would have some considerable respect.

I see Bill Murdoch. Outspoken. He's not an individual who has shined the boots of the Premier. I don't want to use other terms, but "shined the boots of the Premier" is just a way of putting it. He certainly hasn't done that. When he has felt that the government is wrong, he has been prepared to speak out.

There are others who rush to the defence of the Premier. If the Premier says something that's remotely funny, there are great guffaws from those who want to rise and become parliamentary assistants or chairs of committees or indeed get into the cabinet. Or they rush quickly to the Premier's side to be photographed with him.

I found it amusing, as you probably did, that during some of the votes we had in the House, they brought the Premier in near the end, they piled all this work on his desk and then they brought the Tory cameraman up. There was a YPC up there and somebody else and they were taking all these photographs. Well, I watched carefully and the Premier didn't touch the work. He read a magazine, but he didn't touch the work on his desk. This was all, if I may use the word, a phoney photo opportunity.

Let me look at some of the others who are prepared to speak out against the government. Tony Skarica made the mistake of listening to the people in his constituency instead of the people who inhabit the Premier's office, instead of those unelected wiseguys, men and women in the Premier's office who advise. They haven't been elected, mind you, but they're much smarter than the people in the Tory caucus, they believe. I don't think that's something shared by all members of the Conservative caucus. They call the shots. The job of the Conservative backbenchers is simply to applaud at the right time, laugh at the Premier's jokes, and carry the message out to the constituencies. Well, some of these individuals have not been prepared to do so.

I see some others who have been deposed as well from their positions. I don't know the reason. Mr Beaubien, my friend from Lambton, has been deposed from his position. My friend Morley Kells, the member from Lakeshore, who from time to time writes in the Toronto Star and writes, I must say, some rather interesting material, revealing material, in the Toronto Star —

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Mr Bradley: Etobicoke-Lakeshore, as my friend from Mississauga South would want me to say. He doesn't have a position in the cabinet and he's not a parliamentary assistant. I was told that he didn't even want to be a committee Chair and indicated that rather forcefully to the henchperson from the Premier's office who came forward to make that suggestion. This is all true. I have it on good authority.

I see that my friend Garry Guzzo, the former judge from Ottawa-Rideau, has been deposed from his position. Jerry Ouellette, David Tilson, Terry Young. I wonder what sin all of those people have committed to be deposed from their position of parliamentary assistant. We have elevated some others who obviously have been loyal to the Premier and will now merit the \$11,000 extra which goes with this position and the onerous responsibilities that they have.

I want to share with members of the House what they had to say, because if they could speak in this debate this afternoon, if they were allowed to speak, I know some of the things they'd want to say.

“There’s something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province. It’s a dictatorship,” said Wentworth North Tory MPP Toni Skarica, who lost his job as parliamentary assistant to Education Minister John Snobelen. “Anyone who spoke out has been canned” —

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the member for St Catharines, having been elected 22 years ago, knows the standing orders very well. I would respectfully suggest that he has yet to speak to the motion, and he has been speaking for about 15 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I totally agree.

Mrs Marland: So we’re waiting anxiously for him to speak to the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask you to speak to the motion.

Mr Bradley: Let me explain to you why I’m speaking to the motion. The motion is one which restricts debate in the Legislative Assembly to something that’s very confined. It does not allow for moving to committee of the whole. It confines to one day the amount of speaking time that would be available to members of the Legislature on third reading. I know that my friend the member for Wentworth North would want to be able to put these things on the record and is being limited from doing so.

Gary Carr, the member for Oakville South, would want to worry as well about this kind of motion. Let me tell you why he would. He said, “They want a lot of people around who won’t question what the government does.” Indeed, if we limit the debate to simply one day, people such as Gary Carr are not going to be able to speak.

This must be Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound. He says, and I may have to change the wording a little bit because I don’t know if we can use the words in the House: “They tell me if I keep my nose clean and work real hard I might be able to work my way back up. Well, I can tell you two words for them that you can’t print,” Murdoch said.” I can’t imagine what they would be, but he said that. He said, “My biggest disappointment is that if the boss wants to get rid of me, why doesn’t the boss phone me? That’s Mike Harris.”

1700
Apparently, what happened was that my good friend the whip of the Conservative Party was given the job of firing Bill Murdoch. I find that most unfortunate, because if the Premier is going to do it, I think the Premier himself should do it.

You might say: “In the Toronto Star they would say that, but what about the Toronto Sun? What did they say in the Toronto Sun that related to this bill?” Well, they said the following:

The member for Grey-Owen sound says, “You have to be nicey, nicey and” — I can’t say the next — “if you want to get ahead,” Bill Murdoch said.” In other words, he said you must cosy up to the Premier — that’s the best way I can put it — if you want to get back.

Mr Skarica, the member for Wentworth North, was unseated and he had opposed amalgamation. He said, and this is for all the Conservative members, “This is a lesson to other people that if they speak out, expect the

consequences,” Skarica said. “It seems to me anybody who spoke out has had privileges removed.”

Gary Carr said, “They don’t like anybody speaking out,” he said, noting the cabinet” — here’s what Gary Carr said; I don’t know if this is true — “is full of yes-men and women.”

I know there might secretly be some Conservatives who are not in the cabinet who would agree with that. I know the members who will be there, and so do the members of the Conservative caucus. They know the members who are striving hard to make it to the cabinet. Whenever the Premier says, “Jump,” they say: “How high, Mr Premier? How high must I jump?”

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): And you settled for a front-row seat.

Mr Bradley: I’m sure he wasn’t speaking about my friend the agriculture minister, because I can’t believe he would be a yes-man; can’t believe that in all his years. He wouldn’t be speaking about that minister, I’m sure, but he may have been speaking about some other ministers; I don’t know that.

You see, here we have a bill before us that is very unpopular across the province.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Speak to the French people about that.

Mr Bradley: The minister from Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and East Grenville says, “Speak to the French people about that.” I wish I had an opportunity to, but they’re so busy telling me they want Montfort Hospital kept open that they haven’t had time to discuss this, because they see that the government is trying to close Montfort, the only French hospital in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: I’d just like to bring you back to order. Debate the time allocation.

Mr Bradley: What we are seeing in action is a bullying government, a bulldozing government that established its reputation with Bill 26, the massive omnibus bill which gave unprecedented power to unelected people and to a few cabinet ministers and excluded everybody else, including the non-cabinet members of the government caucus, including the member from Rexdale. I would like to see the member from Rexdale have more opportunity to have some input. He is a parliamentary assistant now, so he’s going to get \$11,000 more, but I want to see him have real input. I don’t think he can have that real input if the power under Bill 26 is concentrated in the hands of unelected people and a few privileged cabinet ministers.

I know in their heart of hearts the members of the Conservative caucus agree with me, even though they were told at caucus this morning, “You know, we’ve had a bad week” or “a bad weekend.” They were told, “You have to applaud.” The Premier came in and read the riot act, said, “These people are being outspoken; the rest of you had better behave yourselves.” So when you came into the House today, if the Premier sneezed, everybody was applauding and saying, “Yes, Premier; you’re right, Premier.”

But I didn’t notice Mr Carr, I didn’t notice Mr Skarica, I didn’t notice Mr Murdoch, I didn’t notice Mr Kells, any

of them, applauding and agreeing with the Premier, because they were prepared to be independent-minded members of this House, and they know what a resolution of this kind means: yet another — I call it a closure motion; it's really called time allocation — motion which restricts debate in the Legislative Assembly, because there are many people who simply want to rush the revolutionary agenda through and be done with it and revolutionize the province.

For those who agree with that, I guess that's the way it should be. I can't help but believe that many of the members elected in 1990 and previous to that must be uneasy about many aspects of this revolution.

I heard the Premier today talk about sending his friend Norm Sterling south of the border on a trip to talk to people in various states about environmental issues.

Mrs Marland: Do you remember when you did that?

Mr Bradley: Yes, and am I glad the member for Mississauga South raised this, because in those days Ontario was an environmental leader. I was able to go on behalf of the people of Ontario and the government of Ontario and say: "Here is what we are doing to improve the environment. Would you match our effort?"

Today Mr Sterling would go south and if he said, "Would you match our effort?" it would be: "Would you dismantle your ministry of the environment? Would you cut by one third the staff of the ministry of the environment and the budget of the ministry of the environment?" I don't think that's going to solve our environmental problems.

Looking at education, as all of us must, I remember very well in the past the people who were committed to education in the Conservative Party. Premier Robarts developed the Robarts plan for Ontario, considered to be a progressive change in education, not one that takes us back to the 1940s, not one that satisfies the angry right wing, but a progressive consensus-building education system. Who was his Minister of Education? None other than William Grenville Davis, a fine gentleman who tried to make some changes, and we helped him out. We told him, "Premier Davis, you should sell the jet you are buying for the comfort and convenience of your cabinet ministers and senior government officials and put that money into education." You know, the Premier, after several months of questions, sold the jet, finally got rid of the jet.

But Premier Davis understood, as did Bob Welch — if you want to talk about a Minister of Education who was well liked by everyone because he could build a consensus, it's Bob Welch, who was the member for Brock.

Tom Wells, another progressive in the field of education; Larry Grossman; Dennis Timbrell. These were people who understood mainstream Ontario, not the extreme right wing that some of you represent. He understood mainstream Ontario. He has lost his way, Mr Timbrell — he's running for Brian Mulroney's party — but back in the days when he was in this House, he was considered to be a moderate; now he is not.

I think of Dr Bette Stephenson. Some people in those days thought Dr Stephenson was right-wing. Today she'd be a red Tory, in this House with this group of Conservatives.

All these people must be concerned when they see the damage you are inflicting on education.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Go to the French-language boards.

Mr Bradley: The agriculture minister mentions French-language boards. But you know something? You can't find that in Bob Runciman's literature. The member for Leeds-Grenville, I looked through his campaign literature. I don't see anything bragging about French-language boards. My friend the member for Carleton, I don't see anything bragging about French-language boards; maybe the member for Algoma does. I haven't seen it. Maybe my friend the member for Algoma knows whether some of the Conservatives from ridings where they have been less than friendly to the French language, where some of those members have been less than friendly, put that in their literature. I don't think so. But I know my friend the agriculture minister will in his riding and I appreciate that he will.

1710

These people also talk about fewer politicians. That really means you're putting power in the hands of bureaucrats. As you shrink the number of elected, accountable people, then we know you want to turn the power over to the whiz kids in the Premier's office. Because you're saying now: "Why do we need elected representatives? Why would we listen to the people when we have whiz kids, when we have the brightest people in the land advising the Premier?" Not elected, but advising the Premier — the YPCs. I feel bad for my friends in the Conservative caucus who must be subservient to the people in the Premier's office — I do — and all the members of the government caucus who are in that position.

Some of the people who are most opposed to what you're doing are traditional Conservative supporters. I was at a meeting last night in the constituency of St Catharines and one of the trustees who was present that evening was a person who said he voted for Mike Harris last time. He was a Conservative. I'll tell you, he was less than complimentary, to put it kindly, about Bill 104, Bill 26 and the agenda of this government, because he did not recognize the party he had traditionally supported. He did not recognize that party because of what it was doing to education.

He was insulted as many people at the local level are. Mr Speaker, you're familiar with the local level. You are in close touch with the people in your constituency, I'm certain, who are elected representatives, and you must know how offended they are when the Premier calls them whiners or the Minister of Education uses them as scapegoats when he wants to extol the virtues of Bill 104 and says, "These are greedy, grabbing trustees." Many of these people have given their lives to education as have others.

We have as well caretakers, cleaners, clerks, educational assistants, library technicians, maintenance personnel, secretaries, special ed support technicians, youth care workers, child care workers, counsellors, clerical workers, a variety of people who are involved in the education system whom you want to privatize and outsource now — it says so in your legislation — because you hate

seeing people have a job, I'm sure, of this kind if it could possibly be privatized.

I know these people. They're part of the educational team, if you will. They are people who are part of the activity of education, they're committed to education, and you people wish to fire them out the door and bring in contract workers. That's what the agenda is. You want to bring them back, if you do bring them back, at a lower wage, lower salaries and no benefits. I could imagine that some of the Conservatives in years gone by who served in this House would be ashamed of such an agenda.

The member for Durham East has a weaselly sounding resolution which won't help, but he at least has put it forward because he recognizes he's getting flak from the people in his constituency in this regard.

I've been sent a note by the Conservative caucus asking me to mention Conrad Black and VLTs and I will save both of those for another speech.

What we're going to see is the same thing we're seeing in hospitals. Mr Speaker, I was driving through Listowel the other day, I was up into your part of the province, and I actually drove up to the hospital doors to see what it looked like because I know you would be concerned about the possible closing of the Listowel hospital. I thought they would have inscribed on a sign out front, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." Who said that? Mike Harris said that during the leaders' campaign, just as he said in education that he wouldn't take any money out of the classroom, when indeed we're going to see millions of dollars removed from classroom education.

The next agenda that you have is to replace the teachers with computers throughout the system. Just watch that one coming up. They may not have even told the people outside the cabinet about this yet. Watch that initiative. It's coming up. I give you fair warning about that.

I see a rebellion in the government ranks and that's why I saw the other day some members chose not to vote for the government on Bill 103. I encourage more of you to do that. You know, they can't put everybody in the cabinet; some of you must be disgruntled. I encourage you to vote what's good for your constituents and what your conscience tells you instead of what the whip is instructed to tell you by members of the whiz kid crew in the Premier's office.

The Minister of Education said that he was going to create a crisis in education. My friend the member for Fort William tells me that he has indeed caused a crisis in education.

What we really have to know then is why the government is embarking upon this whole course of action. It's to pay for the tax cut. I was talking to a couple of people last night who were worried about the deficit. They said, "You know, we have to deal with the deficit." I said: "We certainly do, and let me tell you how you can deal with the deficit. You can avoid borrowing money to give rich people a tax break."

The Dominion Bond Rating Service, certainly not a bastion of socialists, said it will cost this government when fully implemented some \$4.8 million in lost

revenue to cut the income tax in the province, an income tax cut which will benefit the wealthiest people in our province to the greatest extent.

I've talked to small-c conservative economists who tell me it's nuts. It just doesn't happen. What you have when you have a drastic cut in government expenditures coupled with a cut in taxes is a contractionary effect on the economy.

When the budget appears you will see evidence of a diminishing of the interest rates in this country. Thanks to the lowering of interest rates in this country, the costs of borrowing are significantly reduced and this government will be able to benefit from that particular initiative.

Second, there are the evil gambling revenues coming in, millions upon millions upon millions of dollars coming in. I know those members who ran on family values, I know those people in the Conservative caucus who extolled the virtues of family values and had the support of the Christian Reformed Church and other churches in our province must be beside themselves at the gambling activities of this government.

I'm getting letters from those churches today. They're saying, "We are opposed to video lottery terminals," which will be placed in every bar, every restaurant, on every street, in every neighbourhood and every community in Ontario. When that happens, I'm going to tell you, the most vulnerable people in our society will be affected and the social price that we will pay will be an awful price.

1720

What you have today is a government which has an agenda which is to restrict debate. My friend from Algoma and some of the rest of us tried to prevent the government from moving forward with that agenda. But I know secretly the government is developing rule changes, because there are some people — I call them the mad right-wingers, the angry right-wingers — who don't like the democratic system. They think you just run it like their own business, where if you don't like somebody you fire them out the door, and if you don't like something that happens, you say, "Lump it; it's too bad," and you whip through quickly. Maybe in business that's the way they want to operate, but this is a democratic milieu in which we find ourselves.

I know my friend the government whip, the member for York Mills, remembers his days in opposition and how important it was to have rules which allowed us to have proper debate and proper consideration. When the previous government brought in draconian rule changes — nobody there now is responsible; it was the member for Windsor-Riverside. He's gone now, so I can say that. When the member for Windsor-Riverside, who is now co-chair of your implementation commission on education, brought them in, I warned that the democratic process would be diminished. Some of my NDP friends agree with me today.

Who voted for it? The Conservative Party voted for those rule changes, because many of them, particularly the newly elected members, don't believe in the democratic institutions. They think you should just ram everything through and close the place down and say, "That's the way it is, and if you aren't one of us, it's just

too bad." They want to rule having one rule for the rich and the privileged and one rule for the rest in the province. Fortunately, there is a bulwark against that: the opposition and decent citizens across this province who will stand up to this government and not enable it to simply bulldoze its way through.

I find this Bill 104 reprehensible. They are completely reprehensible. I believe that the government, if it were wise, would withdraw this piece of legislation, would try to develop a consensus in this province instead of a confrontation and would result in having a better education system because you would have the valuable input of the people on the front line, you would have some moderate opinions brought forward and not simply an agenda imposed from south of the border, an agenda which is not Canadian and does not represent the consensus of the mainstream of the people of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: Again let me assure the members of the third party that we will leave the agreed-upon time for them to participate in the debate. I appreciate the concerns of members across the floor as to whether or not I will have enough time to express my very considerable views on Bill 104 and on this time allocation motion. Unless we're successful in persuading them to vote against the time allocation motion today, I'm very much afraid that I will have no time to further present my views and my concerns about Bill 104 when it is rammed through for third reading.

My participation in today's debate will just be to express surprise that any of the members opposite would have questioned our House leader's participation in this debate today focusing on the bullying, dictatorial approach that is taken by this government, because that indeed is what this time allocation motion is all about. This is one more closure motion in a series of closure motions that come from the Harris bully government.

Lest anybody have any question about that, just look at any of the initiatives this government has taken through and you'll see the pattern. This is what we expect from this government. They decide what their political agenda is going to be, they ram it through with as little consultation as possible — and on this bill, which they consider to be minor, we had to fight to get any public hearings of any kind — and they ignore any concerns that might be raised in that minimal piece of consultation they allow. They dismiss any opposition as being vested interest groups.

It has been absolutely amazing that in the course of just a few days of hearings, as parents and students and representatives of parent councils have come forward and said, "We're worried about Bill 104, we're concerned about this bill," they have somehow become vested interest groups to this government. Anybody who disagrees with them, anybody who wants to resist this agenda is considered to be a vested interest group, so that the members of this government can stay absolutely secure in their sheer arrogance of believing that only they are right, only their view matters and only their agenda counts. Then they can put the bulldozer into gear and they don't have to worry about who gets run over or who gets lost.

Tonight we are on the verge of passing a bill in which the losers are the students in Ontario. If you think I'm not angry and I'm not worried, you're wrong. I don't participate in this debate without a very deep concern for the consequences of this bill and for the fact that we've had no opportunity to have the concerns, that were presented not just by trustees, not just by teachers but by students and by parents, that there's been no real opportunity to have those concerns fully considered.

We've seen the pattern of this government using its bullying approach in its full force on Bill 26. We tried with an all-night sit-in to stop the bullying. We didn't stop the bullying; we slowed it down. We at least got public hearings. But the bill passed; it was rammed through and now we're seeing the consequences of Bill 26 in its ravaging of the health system and its imposing of the government's will on municipalities and the amalgamation.

Last night, in a truly infamous day in this Legislature, we saw one of those amazing consequences of a government able to impose its will on municipalities with again the government ramming through Bill 103 in spite of the opposition of 76% of the people, who said No in a referendum vote. But the government didn't choose to listen. It didn't choose to hear. It didn't choose to understand that the opposition to that bill, the unprecedented filibuster in this House, was because nobody is prepared to lie down quietly and let this government ram through its agenda.

The same thing will be true on Bill 104, because one of the things that has happened is a mobilization of parents who have not been political in the past but who are deeply concerned about education and about the future of their children, and who are not going to lie down quietly. They're not going to go away even as this government uses its bullying force to pass first this time allocation closure motion and then, I'm afraid, to ram through their bill tomorrow. Those parents are not going to go quietly away, because you have awakened a giant out there and it is a giant concerned about its kids.

I find it absolutely amazing that the government House leader today has read into the record in his presentation of the time allocation motion the spin that the Minister of Education has offered, and that I heard government members on the social development committee use, that after all there has been consultation on school board amalgamation in the past. If you want to go back in the record of this government on education, you will find that one of the very first actions of this Minister of Education and this government on education was to cancel the consultation on the very task force report that the government House leader spoke about today.

Yes, John Sweeney, a former Liberal cabinet minister, did undertake on behalf of the previous government to look at whether or not there could be some amalgamations of school boards. In fact, that wasn't what he was asked to do. He was told to go out and figure out how to cut school boards in the province. He came back with a report that was then to have gone out for public consultation, and this government said: "No way. It's part of our cost-cutting. We don't want to hear whether people think these amalgamations are good, bad or indifferent."

There was no real consultation; there was a 1-800, "If you can get through and want to express your concerns" consultation which meant nothing. So there was no consultation on school board amalgamation, and even if there had been, the proposals that this minister presented to this Legislature for school board amalgamation were far more sweeping than anything the Sweeney task force on school board reduction ever contemplated. These proposals have come out of the blue, from the draconian nature of the school board boundaries to the draconian controls that are being put in place for a non-elected, non-accountable education commission. I wonder how you stop a bully that is so determined to just ram through its agenda without consultation, without any regard for the concerns that are expressed, without any willingness to even be open about its own agenda and the consequences of its own legislation.

1730

I'm not sure when this government is going to learn that when it brings forward a piece of legislation it is supposed to include in the legislation how it's going to work. At least it's supposed to be able to answer questions about how it's going to work; it's supposed to be able to answer questions about what it is all going to cost in the end. This government has no answers to any of those questions, and people who have made presentations to the committee, who have come forward with genuine, sincere questions, cannot believe that any government would try and ram through a piece of legislation when it has no answers to the most basic questions. I don't know when this government is going to learn that it can't just simply say, "Trust us; we'll figure out how it's going to work later."

The Minister of Education is out there saying, "I'm going to look at a different model of school board amalgamation and governance for northern Ontario." I happen to know that he's made some commitments to one of his own party members to change some of the board boundaries in Leeds-Grenville, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, Lanark, and at the moment I forget the fourth board that's going to be amalgamated. The member said, "That doesn't work," so the minister is going to change it. We don't even know at this hour, as the government is about to ram through its legislation, what the school board boundaries are going to look like.

What sort of consultation has there really been and why wasn't this in place before? Why weren't these basic understandings worked out and when is the government going to learn that it can't simply turn the responsibility for solving all these problems and answering all these questions over to this non-elected, non-accountable, undemocratic commission?

It is the job of government to understand what the concerns are, what needs to be done. It is the job of government to bring forward legislation which has been duly thought out. It is the job of government to have an understanding of how to implement that legislation in a responsible, planned way. It is the responsibility of government to understand what its initiatives are going to cost and who is going to pay for them. This government has dealt with none of those areas of its responsibility in

bringing forward Bill 104 for its third and final reading tomorrow.

I'm afraid I will have an opportunity tomorrow to go into some of the specific concerns with Bill 104. All I want to say today in conclusion is that this a wrong-headed, perverse, irresponsible, arrogant, anti-democratic way of making laws and it is a bullying way to govern. This bill should not be going to third reading and it should be withdrawn until all the unanswered questions have answers.

Mr Wildman: I rise to speak on this new time allocation motion with sincere regret. I think we should put this debate into some context. It's important for us to recognize that on Bill 104 there was not prolonged debate at second reading. As a matter of fact, this government chose to move a previous time allocation motion when there was only three days' debate at second reading. There was not prolonged debate. There was no delay on the part of members of this House. There were no dilatory actions taken in this House.

The government decided they wanted to get this through in a hurry and they brought in a time allocation motion which allowed for very constricted committee hearings and then only one day of clause-by-clause debate, and then it was to go to committee of the whole debate, only for an hour, to deal with further amendments. Now we are faced with a new time allocation motion which deems that the portion of the previous one that dealt with committee of the whole House has been discharged. I find this very unfortunate, because as the government House leader himself pointed out, in that very restricted time frame when we debated amendments in the standing committee for four hours, there were some significant and important matters identified by all members of the committee that had to be changed.

For one thing, the number of trustees: There were questions raised about whether or not the number of trustees set out in the bill would include aboriginal representation on boards or if it would include student representation on boards, because I had moved an amendment which was accepted by the government that there should be student representation on the boards, and the argument was that the number of elected trustees should not include these two representatives.

At the standing committee the government members said, "We're going to have to reword some of our own clauses to deal with this, to protect and ensure that the intent of these amendments is carried out, and we'll do that at committee of the whole House stage." By moving this time allocation motion, the government House leader has precluded that that matter can be resolved in this bill, and that is most unfortunate.

As a matter of fact, the amendment I had put forward to allow for student representation on boards was also referred to committee of the whole, so despite what the government House leader says, that the government accepted the amendment I had put forward, in fact because of this time allocation motion it is not accepted and is being bypassed. I find it most unfortunate that the government has chosen to take this action.

I also find it completely unacceptable that at this stage of the debate, even under time allocation, the government

would decide that all the amendments that were tabled — I want to emphasize that the amendments we tabled responded to the concerns that were raised by students, parents, teachers, trustees and administrators at the committee when we travelled across Ontario.

Despite that the government House leader says the government listened and moved amendments on the basis of what they had heard, the fact is that overwhelmingly, of 400 submissions before the standing committee, there were only a very few that supported Bill 104. The vast majority opposed Bill 104 and said that it meant there would be less accessibility to trustees, less local accountability, less local decision-making, and that the power to make decisions, whether on curriculum or on funding and allocation of expenditures, would be concentrated in the bureaucracy here at Queen's Park.

The argument was made that this was less democratic and took away from local accountability, which has always been part of our education system. That was the overwhelming view that was expressed by presenters who appeared before the committee. Just as the government ignored the will of the people that was expressed on Bill 103, they've ignored it on Bill 104, and they do not want to deal with amendments that deal with those particular questions.

Another issue that was raised by almost everyone who appeared before the committee was the fact that the Education Improvement Commission, so-called, was above the law, that they could not have their decisions tested in court. Decisions made by this commission could not be appealed to a court of law.

The government responded to that, because it took out that provision in one part of the bill, but it didn't want to tell anybody that it put it back in in another part of the bill. I asked the government lawyer about this. I said, "How is it you took it out but you put it back in?" and he said, "We wanted to take it out so that decisions of the commission could be appealed to the courts, but we put it back in in the other section to make it difficult to appeal to the courts." Talk about a shell game. The fact is, the government wants the commission to be able to make decisions. Those decisions will stand and it will be very, very difficult for those decisions to be appealed by anyone, whether it be boards of education, parents, ratepayers or anyone interested in education.

1740

One of the justifications for this time allocation motion is that we in the opposition have held up Bill 104. Well, you're darned right we've held up Bill 104. We're very pleased that we've held up Bill 104 and frankly we wish we could hold it up some more.

This is a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the education of kids. It has absolutely nothing to do with improving education for students in Ontario. What it has to do with is control and power in education. What it's about is the minister trying to aggrandize himself, to ensure that he as the Minister of Education and Training will have complete control over the education system.

It is to make it impossible for local boards to set their own agendas. It will mean there will be larger boards with larger numbers of students, even greater geographic areas in some parts of the province, and fewer trustees

with no decision-making power. Frankly, I don't understand why anybody would want to run to be a school trustee once this bill comes into effect, because what it does is it concentrates decision-making in the ministry and leaves the local board to have to deal with all the complaints. They will become essentially a complaints bureau and they won't be able to do anything to resolve the concerns that parents and students and ratepayers have about education in their own communities.

Let's look at some of the things we heard when we went on committee, holding hearings across the province, and let's see how the government has or has not responded. The fact is this: We went to Ottawa and we heard presentations from people from eastern Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Well, if they are in it for the money, they are not in it for the right reason.

Mr Wildman: The member from Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and East Grenville will know this. He will know that we heard from the Lanark board, we heard from representatives of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, we heard from the Prescott and Russell board and we heard from the Leeds-Grenville board. This is the alphabet soup board that is being set up by this new proposed boundary system.

Mr Pouliot: What is it going to be called?

Mr Wildman: I guess it's going to be called the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and Prescott and Russell board. That's why I call it the alphabet soup board.

The fact is that this government claims it's simply following Mr Sweeney's proposals. Well, we know and the member for Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and the member for Leeds-Grenville both know that's not true, because in that particular case Mr Sweeney suggested there should be some amalgamations in that part of the province but he said there should be two boards, not one. We heard from representatives of all those boards when we went to Ottawa and all of them said, "If you must have amalgamations, do what Sweeney proposed; don't do what this government is suggesting." The member for Lanark-Renfrew was on the committee and he said, "Don't worry, we're going to work this out." He was on the committee that day.

Then we went to northwestern Ontario, to Thunder Bay, and we had presentations there from a number of boards and parents and teachers from northwestern Ontario. They pointed out to us that there is a proposed board in northwestern Ontario that is about the size of France. It was also pointed out that the government has talked a lot about —

Mr Pouliot: "Pick up the phone."

Mr Wildman: Yes, teleconferencing, that this is the way we would deal with this: We would have teleconferencing. Unfortunately, it was pointed out that in many of the communities in northwestern Ontario they don't have the infrastructure to make teleconferencing possible. I understand they have to have five lines for it to work. In many cases they only have two lines. In some cases they don't even have digital equipment; they're still with rotary equipment. They can't do it; it can't be done.

Then we went to Sudbury and we heard presentations there from people in northeastern Ontario. One of the presentations that was most effective was the presentation by Janice Beatty, secretary-treasurer of the Hornepayne Board of Education. She pointed out that she had to travel nine hours to get to the hearing. She also pointed out that in the proposal there is going to be a board that runs from Hornepayne and Hearst through Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls and Timmins into Timiskaming, almost to North Bay, the whole of Highway 11.

Mr Pouliot: It doesn't register. Look at them.

Mr Wildman: It did register, interestingly enough, with the committee, because after the committee heard this presentation a motion was put to request that the boundaries be reviewed and that motion passed unanimously in the standing committee. Every member of the standing committee, including all the government members, voted for it, because they understood that this board boundary being proposed made absolutely no sense.

Subsequently, the committee also passed another motion asking that all the boundaries in Ontario be reviewed. It passed unanimously as well — all the government members. I regret to say that one of the members was from Hamilton-Wentworth and he has since been treated to his reward for being a person, I guess, who listens to the people who want decisions made fairly. But the fact is that the committee voted unanimously, and now we have a time allocation motion before this House that is going to make it impossible for the government to respond to the decision that was twice made by the standing committee.

There were a couple of other boards we heard about that are just absolutely nuts. We went to the Brantford area and we heard a presentation from the boards in the London area: London, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin. Again the government members tried to argue — Mr Johnson tried to argue, "This is just what Sweeney proposed," and then he was taken aback when the presenters, who were members of the board, pointed out that no, it isn't what Sweeney proposed. Mr Sweeney proposed two boards in that area, not one. In fact Mr Sweeney proposed 88 boards altogether, not 66. So when the government goes around saying, "We're just doing what Sweeney proposed," they aren't telling the truth.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Nobody said that.

Mr Wildman: The government House leader said that, as a matter of fact, in this debate. That's what he said. The member for Brantford said that in the hearing in Brantford and he was taken down a peg or two by the presenters who said, "No, no, that's not what you're proposing."

Mrs Marland: Oh, you mean Mr Johnson.

Mr Wildman: Yes, Mr Johnson, that Mr Johnson.

What did Mr Sweeney propose in Toronto? I don't know whether what he proposed was right or not, because we didn't have the consultation; this government truncated the consultation. What he proposed was four boards in Metropolitan Toronto. What does this government propose? One board with 22 trustees for 310,000 students — 310,000 students, one board.

The argument was made by the government members that the reason they had to have one board in Toronto was because they had to mirror what was being proposed in Bill 103 for one city. We asked them; "If you're going to have one city in Toronto, and you're now proposing to have 57 members on the council, how come you're proposing one board with 22 trustees? If you're going to mirror what is being proposed on the municipal side, why aren't you increasing the number of trustees above 22?" The government members on the committee had absolutely no answer, and they've got no answer for the people of Toronto who overwhelmingly rejected the idea of one board for this whole metropolitan area.

Now we have a time allocation motion which is designed to ensure that we get this through without real debate and without real consideration of what the overwhelming view was that was proposed when we had the hearings.

1750

We have stalled the debate on this bill. We had hoped that would give the government the time to let us know what the whole package is on what they call education reform. We had hoped they would tell us what the funding formula is going to be. Is it going to mean, as many people fear, a significant cut in the amount of money that many boards have to spend on education of students? Is it going to mean significantly more cuts in classroom education despite the promises of the Conservatives in 1995? We need to know what that funding formula is. We had hoped the government would put that before us, as well as whatever changes they are contemplating with regard to teacher collective bargaining, but they chose not to do that. Instead, they chose to move a time allocation motion which rams this through without real debate or consideration, a bill that the minister himself admits is flawed and is going to need adjustment and amendment.

The other problem that was pointed out when we had hearings was that while other jurisdictions have cut the number of school boards and amalgamated boards — Alberta, for instance, has brought down the number of boards from 70-some to 57, 57 boards for the same number of students that we have in one board in Metropolitan Toronto. So following the argument that Alberta has done it and we should follow Alberta's example, we should have 57 boards, I suppose, in Metropolitan Toronto. The argument was made, "Well, British Columbia has done it," ignoring the fact that British Columbia took three years to amalgamate a much smaller number of boards so that they could do it in a way that ensured all of the problems could be worked out in a way that was satisfactory.

This government is determined to ram this through, and that's why we've got the time allocation motion. This government is only going to give eight months for all of the boards and the committees to work this all out so it's in place by January 1, 1998. Frankly, everybody who knows anything about the education system knows that we are going to have chaos in January 1998 in school boards across this province. I know that's not a problem for the minister. The minister, I think, believes in chaos theory. He said he wanted to create a crisis. He's doing

it. He said he wanted to invent a crisis. He didn't want to improve education; he said you could improve education to death. What he wanted, I guess, was to destroy it so that he could rebuild it in whatever image, whatever vision he may have, which he has not yet made clear to us, other than we appear to be headed for significant change, significant cuts in classroom education, a move to privatization, to charter schools, which is going to drain the public education system, a system that we are all proud of in this province, or should be.

There are a lot of things that this government could be doing to improve Bill 104. They could be bringing in a children's bill of rights as developed by Toronto parents and suggested to the committee by the chair of the Toronto board. Then again, they'd only be able to do that if they believed in the right of kids to education, and they don't. They could have proposed a system for ensuring that we don't have boards that are far too large in geographic size and are too large in terms of numbers of students related to numbers of trustees. They could have brought in a process for determining that that was democratic, not something that is going to be imposed by a commission whose decisions it will be very, very difficult to appeal.

The government could make clear what the right is of school boards to collect local taxes to determine how they could have revenue enough to meet the particular problems of their own particular area.

If the government was serious about doing this in a reasonable way, in a proper way, they could have delayed the effect of this bill for a year. They could have at least given a year to work all this out. We could have had then a year and a half to work out all the problems, which are going to be legion, in trying to merge collective agreements, deal with seniority lists, have early retirement packages, I suppose, deal with assets and liabilities of various boards and how they're all going to be worked out.

Instead this government is going to ram this legislation through without any idea of what the transition costs are going to be and leave all these decisions to an unelected commission whose decisions are almost impossible to appeal. And people wonder why we say this government does not accept democracy.

The government could have brought in real amendments that got rid of any reference to contracting out. Instead they took out the word "promote," that the commission will not "promote" contracting out, but they left in it that the commission will "facilitate" outsourcing. Frankly, that means they're still going to do it.

Finally, we believe the government could have ensured that school councils remain advisory and that there be a continuation for local accountability, local decision-making powers under the bill. Instead, what do we have? We have a time allocation motion which goes even further than the previous time allocation motion, which says that this government is not prepared to amend this bill in any significant way. They are going to go through with it despite the fact that the vast majority of people who appeared before the committee said this was bad for education, it was bad for students, it removed local accountability, it removed local decision-making for

education and it is going to make for a much larger bureaucracy, a centralized bureaucracy, that is going to harm education, a system that has been built up over 150 years.

We are seeing the most significant restructuring of education in 150 years in this province and we have to ask, what is the rush? Why does this government have to get it through so quickly? Why does it require time allocation motions that do not allow for real amendments that respond to the concerns that have been raised? I think I know why. Because this government has determined that they are going to give a tax cut in the next fiscal year and they have got to get the money somewhere. They've got to get the money out of health care, they've got to get the money out of community services and they've got to get the money out of education.

The minister says he's going to freeze the expenditures over the next year and a half, that there's not going to be a further cut. This year he said he froze the expenditures and in fact there was over a \$200-million cut. Mark my words: The new funding formula is crucial. We should have seen it before the passage of Bill 104. That funding formula is going to mean fewer funds for kids' education in this province.

The French-language boards themselves appreciate the changes that are under this bill and support it, but even they have recognized that there's a need for transitional funding to be made available to be able to get their boards up and running. They have absolutely no commitment from this government that the transitional funding is there. The minister himself says he doesn't know what the transitional costs are going to be. He has no idea. He doesn't know where the money's going to come from. Well, I know where it's going to come from. It's going to come out of classroom education for kids.

This is bad legislation. It is being hurried, it is being sped up because this government does not want to have debate, it doesn't want to respond to those who are opposed to it or those who have concerns. This is a government that is determined to proceed despite what everybody else has to say. I regret that we have this time allocation motion before us today. I urge the members of the House to act as the government members did in the standing committee. I urge the members of this House to consider this very seriously and determine that we should have the time to put this through correctly; vote against this time allocation motion and move to committee of the whole so we can have real amendments; and change this bill so it responds to the needs of students in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member for Riverdale has been taken ill. She had a late show scheduled. I would ask the indulgence of the House that it be rescheduled. She has had to go home ill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent to reschedule the late show? It is agreed.

Government notice of motion number 16. Is it the wish of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye." All those opposed, say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 15-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1801 to 1816.

The Acting Speaker: Would the members please take their seats.

On government notice of motion number 16, all those in favour rise one at a time.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bassett, Isabel	Hardeman, Ernie	Parker, John L.
Beaubien, Marcel	Harris, Michael D.	Pettit, Trevor
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Brown, Jim	Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian
Carroll, Jack	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Shea, Derwyn
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Sheehan, Frank
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Stewart, R. Gary
Eves, Ernie L.	Leadston, Gary L.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fisher, Barbara	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Fox, Gary	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	McLean, Allan K.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Miclash, Frank
Boyd, Marion	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Morin, Gilles E.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Chiarelli, Robert	Kennedy, Gerard	Pouliot, Gilles
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Laughren, Floyd	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Welland-Thorold has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given today to the Attorney General. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter. The minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I should first point out that this notice of dissatisfaction was served yesterday as a result of, in my opinion and, I tell you, that of a whole bunch of people who watched the response of the Attorney General, the Attorney General's grossly inadequate response.

It's apparent that the Attorney General will not be here to respond. I should indicate clearly that the Attorney General had a pressing matter this evening and advised me of it. I certainly had no quarrel with his being unavailable this evening and I don't want to read anything inappropriate or unresponsive into his absence tonight. However, I did invite the Attorney General to request unanimous consent to defer this matter to Thursday or to Tuesday of next week. The Attorney General declined, for reasons that weren't made apparent to me.

At the same time, I look forward to seeing the parliamentary assistant arrive in the chamber to respond to this, either the old one or the new one. Quite frankly, if Mr Tilson — who was fired, as we know, as parliamentary assistant, notwithstanding that he puckered as well as anybody, in so far as I could see, among the government back benches. Mr Tilson, notwithstanding that he was fired, as far as I'm concerned, can stand in for Mr Flaherty.

I'd also welcome, of course, seeing Mr Flaherty on the other side. I look and look and look. Here we are, we've got parliamentary assistants making their \$78,000-plus a year, plus another \$11,500; you're talking about \$90,000 a year to be a parliamentary assistant. Out of the 83-member government caucus, only eight of them do not receive a stipend in addition to their base \$78,000 salary. Only eight out of 83 aren't at the trough along with that whole long roster of ministers, committee Chairs, parliamentary assistants etc.

We know why Mr Carr is no longer a parliamentary assistant. He dared to unpucker. He dared to clench his teeth and take the pucker off his face for even the briefest of moments, as with Mr Murdoch and as with a member I respect a great deal, Toni Skarica, the member for Wentworth North. It's unfortunate.

The issue yesterday, and the issue today, is very much the incompetence of the Attorney General, the apparent, obvious, unmitigated, singular incompetence of the Attorney General and his mishandling of the family support plan and the victimization of thousands of women and their children across the province as the result of the Attorney General's failure to come to grips with his responsibilities as the minister responsible for the family support plan.

We know how the bungling began, because the minister, prevailed upon I'm sure by Mr Eves, the Treasurer, and by the Premier, Mr Harris — the Premier is in town from time to time. When he's not skiing or golfing, he is in town from time to time, signing the memos that constitute orders.

Mr Harnick, in response to the pressure applied by the inner circle, by the backroom gang, the Tom Longs of Toronto, terminated the jobs of some 290 family support plan workers and shut down eight regional offices.

He stood in this House through the fall of 1996, day after day after day, in response to questions from the opposition, in response to questions from Ms Boyd, Ms Lankin, from Howie Hampton, from Ms Martel, from Mr Wood and Mr Martin from the north, insisting that the plan was up and operational. Well, horsefeathers, because on November 7 of last year, Ms Martel and I took that now somewhat infamous early morning visit to Mr Harnick's mega-FSP office up in Downsview, in North York. We found the office in disarray, inoperative, not working, totally incapable of processing any of the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars that were destined for children and their mothers and that were rightly theirs.

Charlie Harnick, the Attorney General, insisted that Bill 82 be passed. The opposition supported Bill 82, which gave them these new tools, to wit, among other things, the suspension of the driver's licence of a defaulting payor. The Attorney General promised that the tools made available to the government in Bill 82 would be

available by the end of January. Here we are at the end of April 1997 and not one of those new enforcement techniques is available. It's shameful. I tell you, it's criminal. I tell you there has to be some responsibility accepted by this government.

That's why Ms Martel and I are going to be in Windsor tomorrow, at the Windsor library, meeting with victims of the family support plan. We're going to be at the Riverside Library in Windsor at 1 pm and we'll be talking to victims there.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I await —

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Mr Speaker, can I have a point of order?

The Acting Speaker: No.

The business of this House being completed, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow, Wednesday, April 23, 1997.

The House adjourned at 1827.

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Larkin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
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Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara South / -Sud	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Nickel Belt	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)		Colle, Mike (L)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		Vacant
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Norfolk	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Northumberland	Patten, Richard (L)
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Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
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		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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Trevor Pettit, Peter L. Preston, Bruce Smith,
Bud Wildman
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

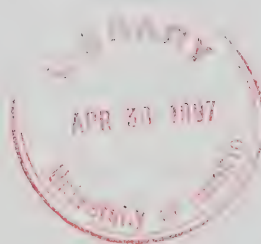
Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 23 April 1997

Mercredi 23 avril 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 avril 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FERRY SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a number of occasions I have spoken of the great injustice that this government is committing on those Ontarians who live in island communities as a result of Mike Harris's decision that municipalities should assume full funding responsibility for the operating and financing of ferry services that link those islands to the mainland. It means that in my riding, Amherst Island, Wolfe Island and Howe Island will in effect have to increase their taxes eightfold in order to pay for those services.

You can well imagine my disgust and anger at receiving a letter from the Minister of Transportation just yesterday in which he states, "Let me remind you that the province is not reducing any transportation services." They're not only reducing the transportation services; they're reducing the only services these people have to the mainland.

He goes on to say, "We are reducing duplication of the delivery of local transportation services to ensure Ontario taxpayers have fair, efficient and accountable public services." Duplication? There's only one ferry that links each one of these islands to the mainland.

These decisions are callous; they are reprehensible; they have caused a great amount of distress and anxiety for the people of these islands. Why don't the minister and the government do the right thing and accept their responsibility, that they are responsible for the governing of all of the people of Ontario? Put the funding of these ferries back into the provincial budget. These people demand it; all Ontarians demand it.

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Bill 107 is part of the downloading from the province on to municipalities. It transfers 25% of Ontario's water supply system to towns and cities. During public hearings on the bill, some presenters asked if Bill 107 is about privatizing Ontario's water and sewer systems.

Yes, it is. In fact, Bill 107 provides the terms for privatization, which provides generous incentives. For example, companies that buy public water and waste water facilities will have access to all properties connected with those facilities and will not be required to pay interest from provincial grants. Presenters said it would be impossible for municipalities to take on the

added expense of water and waste water facilities without either raising municipal taxes or selling off the facility to a private company.

In England, privatization of water services led to outrageous increases in the price of water, loss of water services to low-income people, putting their health and their children's health at risk, outbreaks of disease, loss of jobs, and the failure to reinvest the profits into crumbling infrastructures. This must not be allowed to happen in Ontario.

I urge the minister to amend the legislation to specifically prohibit privatization of our water and waste water facilities.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, will, if passed into law, reduce school board bureaucracy and focus resources on the individual student and student achievement in the classroom.

However, don't just take my word for it. It was former NDP Education Minister Dave Cooke who, on May 5, 1993, had this to say: "We need to take a look at the number of school boards that we have in this province, we need to take a look at how much money is being spent in the classroom versus how much money is being spent in administration and in school boards and...we need to put more money into the classrooms instead of in structures...." On December 7, 1993, Dave Cooke said, "Millions of dollars can and need to be saved in our education system." On November 23, 1994, Dave Cooke said he was ready to bring in legislation to reduce the number of school boards in Ontario.

Even the current leader of the official opposition said on January 13, 1997, "There is generally a fairly broad support for reduction in school boards...."

It should be clear to everyone in this House that our children's education and their futures are too important to let partisan differences prevent us from working together on Bill 104 to make students, not bureaucrats, the focus of an affordable, world-class education system.

DIRECTED BLOOD DONATIONS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House an issue and a concern that affects all Ontarians. There was a policy established by the Canadian Red Cross on March 17 that would not allow anyone who doesn't speak English or French to donate or store their own blood in case they need it for surgery. As a result of that policy, one of my constituents yesterday was turned away, and hundreds and thousands of Ontarians and Canadians have been turned away since March 17.

We're calling upon the Minister of Health in this province to direct the Red Cross as well as the other officials across this province to change this policy. There must be some flexibility and some room for interpreting services to be available. As the policy now stands, individuals who walk in with a family member or a relative to interpret for them are still not allowed to donate blood or to store their own blood. This is a practice that is unacceptable.

I commend the Red Cross for the steps it has taken to improve the safety of the blood supply in this country, but I believe this step goes too far and frankly millions of Canadians will be unentitled to give or store their own blood if this is not changed. I call upon the Minister of Health in this province to work with the federal government and the Red Cross to change what is clearly a discriminatory policy and one that is negatively affecting millions of Canadians.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): The government is at it again. They're not listening to the people of Ontario. They're just moving ahead with their agenda and implementing things that will have a massive and negative impact on communities.

Just a couple of months ago the community of Sault Ste Marie, under the leadership of the mayor, had a forum at city council. It went on for two nights, literally 40 or 50 presentations on health care and the impact of the download, the cutting of money to the hospitals in our area and the stories that were beginning to evolve. We were all excited by the content of the input, by the positive, constructive suggestions that were made and the overall tone of that exercise.

The member for Algoma, Bud Wildman, and I sent an invitation to the Minister of Health to meet with this group, the forum leadership and some members of my community, to hear the results of this report, to hear from the people of Sault Ste Marie and Algoma what they felt will be in the best interests of them and of health care and their families. But alas, as has become the trend in this place, the minister has said no, he doesn't want to meet.

He's already made up his mind. He knows what he's going to do. He understands very well that this is not about improving health care, this is not about providing the best of health care to the citizens of Algoma and Sault Ste Marie. This is about cutting, about taking money out. He will not meet with the mayor and the forum leadership and the community of Sault Ste Marie about this very important issue, and that's a shame.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm proud to advise the House that April 20 to 26 is National Organ Donor Week. Organ and tissue donation represents the gift of life from one individual to another. One person's gift may benefit a number of people. For more than 1,200 people in Ontario, receiving an organ or tissue transplant is the only hope for a healthy, productive life, or life at all.

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Medical advances have made it possible to successfully transplant the following organs: kidney, liver, heart, lung, pancreas and small bowel, as well as these tissues: cornea, skin, bone and heart valves.

People are dying because of a critical shortage of donated organs. Transplantation is a proven, effective medical treatment for patients who have no other alternatives. What you can do now affects lives in the future. I'm asking everybody in the House to sign a donor card, discuss it with your family and ask them to respect your wishes. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of families who have already made donations that have made a difference in the lives of many other people.

If anyone requires further information, they should contact the multiple organ retrieval and exchange program at 1-800-263-2833.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The grape and wine industry, which produces millions of dollars of economic activity and thousands of jobs directly and indirectly for Ontario, is being placed in jeopardy by a proposal by the Ontario government to have estate wineries assessed as industrial properties.

These wineries are situated on land zoned agricultural, since there's a large farm component to these operations. Land zoned agricultural and buildings on it do not have access to services available to businesses on land zoned industrial. As well, wineries within the Niagara Escarpment plan are justifiably subject to strict land use restrictions.

As a result of this policy of the Conservative Harris government, a number of wineries are facing staggering tax increases which could amount to thousands of dollars, a penalty which may well make the difference between continuing their business operations and shutting their doors. At the very least, this regressive and ill-considered tax change will discourage the opening of new wineries or the expansion of existing operations.

I am calling upon the Harris government to abandon this unwise and punitive measure affecting estate wineries in Ontario and to return to the farm assessment model, which is far more appropriate to estate wineries and consistent with similar operations across the province.

Tourism in the grape-growing and wine-producing area of Ontario is growing in economic importance. Wineries continue to provide good jobs, as do grape-growing farm operations. The fate of our grape and wine industry is in the hands of the provincial government. Only the abandonment of this disastrous taxation policy is acceptable.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I just had the opportunity and the honour to meet with a group of parents and students from Bowmore Road school in my riding. The parents' representative of the home and school and the parents' council and many students were here today to give me what amounts to over 2,000 cards and letters that have been signed, and many more signa-

tures from the school-parent community on a petition, all directed to the Premier and the Minister of Education with respect to changes in our education system, and in particular Bill 104.

The card to the Premier and the minister reads:

"You promised your cuts would not touch our students' classrooms. Keep your promise. Keep the present level of funding. Schools belong to the community. Keep the community's tax dollars in the community. Let the community decide what's best for their schools. "Children matter. Quality public education matters."

The letters set out their concerns about the rapid and massive changes that are taking place and that they will jeopardize the quality of education for our children by not recognizing that our children's classrooms do include libraries and librarians, music and phys-ed teachers, caretakers, principals and secretaries, remedial, special education and ESL programs, teaching assistants and psychological support — many issues of concern.

These parents of one school in one neighbourhood have gathered over 2,000 signatures urging the government to cease the insanity, to keep our education a public system.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Earlier this morning a media conference was held here at Queen's Park by a group of teachers, students, parents and trustees. They came to this Legislature to tell this government what they really think of Bill 104, and this is what they had to say:

Trustee Bob Dobson said he believes Bill 104 will eliminate school board bureaucracy and result in more money being placed directly towards the classroom.

Trustee Tina Rotondi-Molinari said Bill 104 will result in funding equity for all students in Ontario, and that while other governments talked about reforming education, the government will act accordingly.

Todd Blimke, a student, said he believes 104 will finally cut down on administrative red tape and put more money towards classroom education.

Teacher Gary O'Dwyer said Bill 104 will refocus the education system back on students in the classroom. He also complimented the education minister for his openness and accessibility throughout the consultative process around Bill 104.

Parents Mary Smeenck, Kathleen Pinto and Eve Peterson applaud this bill for bringing accountability to bear on school curricula.

Ontarians are telling us that Bill 104 makes winners of all stakeholders in our education system, including taxpayers, parents and, most of all, students in the classroom.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LOBBYIST REGISTRATION

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I am pleased to announce two new initiatives that support the

government's commitment to manage its activities openly, fairly and transparently.

Taxpayers have the right to know that dealings undertaken by the government will serve to advance the public interest.

We are moving to become the first Canadian province to enact a lobbyist registration law. If the legislation is passed as planned in the fall, this public registry will include a list of all people and firms who are paid to lobby the government. This will allow taxpayers to have open access to information about companies and individuals seeking to influence government decision-making.

Times have changed since existing conflict-of-interest rules were established. The government now deals with a variety of organizations as we look for ways to improve delivery of services.

It's a matter of good practice to ensure that we establish clear rules that reflect this new world and ensure accountability on the part of government. For this reason we are establishing a new conflict-of-interest policy for senior public officials and senior public servants to reflect our wide range of relationships with other government organizations and the private sector.

The new policy covers individuals involved in a range of activities, including contracting out, franchising and public-private partnerships.

New provisions will expand and reinforce existing rules in the Public Service Act which govern public servants in their day-to-day activities. Ministers are already covered by the Members' Integrity Act, which has rules consistent with those being put in place as of today.

People in positions of authority who have access to confidential or insider information cannot use it to gain an unfair advantage or put the public interest at risk. They may be restricted for up to 12 months from accepting jobs with organizations they had significant dealings with as a government employee within the previous 12 months.

Individuals are also prohibited from switching sides if they were involved in a government transaction. For instance, if they had worked on a government tender, they cannot then go to work for any of the bidders for that tender before the contract is awarded. Potential conflict situations will be reviewed and ruled on by an impartial third party.

Both of these initiatives, lobbyist registration and conflict-of-interest provisions, will ensure that the process of government is kept open, fair and transparent and will ensure that the public interest and taxpayers' investment continue to be protected.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): The Liberal Party applauds the government that would bring forward any kind of legislation that would be preventive in terms of ruling on conflict of interest, in particular in light of the Conservative government that is now in office in Ontario.

Very specifically, the government is having to look at legislation that governs lobbyists for one reason: You have been absolutely inundated by lobbyists over the last two years, and I ask you why. Why? Because this is a government that is absolutely not listening to the very

people who call on a regular phone and want to talk to the government.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Papatello: Isn't it interesting how sensitive the caucus is on that side of government? May I say to the members opposite that you in fact may be the first ones to have to hire your own lobbyist to lobby your own cabinet, to lobby your own Premier. In fact I may have to hire a lobbyist. I've been begging for a meeting with the Premier to discuss very relevant issues in my own riding and can't get the Premier — he can't possibly be afraid of the member for Windsor-Sandwich. I may have to hire a lobbyist.

We're very happy to see the kind of legislation you're putting in place — any of it would be good. Now let's talk about regular folk across Ontario who have tried for months to speak to their government members about legislation that they're putting forward. Let's talk about Bill 84 and the firefighters. How many lobbyists do the firefighters have to hire to get you to understand reason and the damaging effects of Bill 84 across Ontario? Do the families who have disabled children at home in Durham region need to hire a lobbyist so that their own member, Minister of Community and Social Services Janet Ecker, would actually respond to the people in her own riding?

We have any number of examples of members who don't listen to their own constituents at home. Why would the minister today, the Management Board Chair, not bring forward some kind of legislation that would deal with the ministers themselves? A high embarrassment for the Ontario government when a Minister of Finance — "Eves Understated Travel Expenditures." Why would we not see some kind of regulation come forward that would actually put the ministers on the hook to answer for the kind of expenses they are making in the face of wide cuts across the board in every ministry? Why would this not happen?

I think it's very ironic that yesterday all these order paper questions were tabled with the government — order papers that ask specific questions about providing detailed accounts of expense claims submitted by every minister and their senior staff, that in fact will tell us whether there are other ministers such as the Minister of Finance, who allows his senior staff to submit expenses on the minister's behalf.

Is this the kind of embarrassment that we have to face as Ontario legislators? Whether it's part of our party or not, this is a government that represents us all and a Globe and Mail article that goes across the country. This is the kind of action that we would prefer to see the government leading towards, stopping this kind of nonsense that is happening currently in this government.

Let's talk a little bit about some kind of regulation concerning ministries and the type of advertising that they can run. In the face of the massive cuts in health care, we see the Ministry of Health wasting taxpayers' dollars running government advertising right across Ontario, so that I get the call from the 76-year-old woman who spent

hours waiting in the emergency room to explain to her why she watches Mike Harris standing outside of a hospital wasting her taxpayers' dollars on government ads. But today you come forward with legislation that deals with lobbyists.

I have a question for the Management Board Chair. Is this going to be a retroactive position with this legislation? When our leader Dalton McGuinty advanced questions to the Premier on this very issue, at that point we already knew, Paul Rhodes gone, Perry Martin gone, Ed Arundell gone, Mitch Patten gone. When we look at the key company that is today running the maintenance contract for MTO in southwest — it's called IMOS — and look at the key individuals who are running that company today, every one of them is a key senior bureaucrat from the Ministry of Transportation. What kind of a link is there for those people coming from the ministry and moving into the private sector? Key positions — those are positions that are not part of a consulting firm, but they are part of the companies that have already won lucrative contracts from this very government. All of this throws a great deal of suspicion on this very government.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I am pleased to respond to the Chair of Management Board and to indicate to him that we support the principle of lobbyist registration and conflict-of-interest provisions for senior public servants. It's a necessary step to take.

I would reinforce what he says in reference to the fact that we live in a new world now. I certainly agree that with this government in office it is a new world when it comes to dealing with lobbyists. I sat on the resources development committee last week to talk about privatization of sewer and water services, and I could see the lobbyists just drooling in the audience, wondering how they were going to get in on the action. It is important that we have registration of lobbyists so it's more out in the open than it is now, because right now it is all behind closed doors.

Never in the history of this province have we needed guidelines for lobbyists like we do now. Whether we're talking about sewer and water services, whether we're talking about LCBO, whether we're talking about Ontario Hydro, can you imagine the profits that await the private sector if they get their hands on the water services of this province, if they get their hands on the LCBO and the profits that lie therein, or on Ontario Hydro? There are enormous potential profits. For that reason, this government knows that it would not have dared to move forward with privatization without registration for lobbyists.

Interjection: Will you support it?

Mr Laughren: As I indicated at the beginning, yes, I will support this registration once we have seen the details in it. We anticipate that next week the minister for privatization will be coming forward with his long-awaited framework for privatization and we'll see how that will tie in with the registration for lobbyists as well.

What happened with one example of privatization was in the Chatham district where the Minister of Transportation privatized the maintenance of highways in that area. It was a \$27-million contract, which very effectively shut

out all the small contractors who anticipated that they could be part of the action of the new world of contracted-out services by this government. The Minister of Transportation wrote the requirements in such a way that only the large operators were allowed to get in. I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, it was Miller Paving that won the award in Chatham; I think that's correct. That's hardly a small contractor. You wonder who's going to be out there looking after the interests of the small contractors as privatization really swings into full gear.

We will be supporting these provisions as long as they are transparently clear for everyone. I would simply encourage lobbyists out there who are sitting waiting to see what they have to do not to wait too long. Get in right now. Phone the four backbenchers who were fired from the parliamentary assistants' jobs. Phone them right away. Get on the list, because those people need the help of a lobbyist more than any large corporation ever will.

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I would encourage the lobbyists out there to get busy, get their feet wet, get their foot in the door by starting with those four poor, fired, backbench, former parliamentary assistants. Those are the people who will need the help, because they were treated with such disrespect by the Premier.

I encourage the lobbyists to get on board and follow the rules as they're going to be laid out. I haven't seen them yet. All we've seen is the announcement from the minister. I think following that will be the framework for privatization. When we see those two together, side by side, as they say, then we'll have a better understanding to what extent this government is serious about regulating the lobbyists in this province.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to draw your attention to Hansard, page 7518, April 2. You will recall that on that day I raised a point of order with you related to a memo that had come into my possession regarding a meeting that was planned in southwestern Ontario for Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone, the co-chairs of the proposed Education Improvement Commission, a meeting which was to take place on April 9. I understand that meeting did take place.

I pointed out at that time that there was a handwritten memo written on this memorandum by a Mr Jack, who is the senior person in the Ministry of Education regional office, asking for names of representatives who would attend the meeting and stating that the deadline for this information was March 26, the day we would be dealing with clause-by-clause of Bill 104.

I pointed out at that time that the bill was not in place; the memo did not even use the term "proposed Education Improvement Commission." I asked you if this did not in any way seem to be contempt of the House, since the House has not yet, even now, passed Bill 104 into law. This meeting took place and other similar meetings have taken place. There was one in Ottawa a week or so ago.

At the time, Speaker, you thanked me for the submission and you said you would take the opportunity to review this and report back at a later date. The date is later.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Normally when I say that and you bring it back to my attention, I would have some rationale for the length of time it has taken to report back. I would explain at this time that I don't have any rationale other than that I forgot. I give you my undertaking that I will report back with due dispatch.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have another point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Another point of order, different?

Mr Wildman: Yes, a different point of order. As you know, Speaker, ministries of the government of Ontario as well as the government's many agencies, boards and commissions are accountable to this Legislature through ministers of the cabinet. Standing order 39(a) states very clearly, "Ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

I'm speaking in particular reference to the annual report of the registrar general, the Vital Statistics Act. The filing requirement for this is: "The registrar general shall, after the close of each calendar year, submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council a report as to the number of births, marriages, deaths, still-births, adoptions, divorces and changes of name registered during the preceding calendar year and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The 1996 report is still outstanding. It has not been submitted to this House. I'm not aware that the appropriate minister has provided this House with any explanation for the delay, so I would request that you convey to the minister the concerns of the House that the required report has not yet been filed.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I will simply say that there may be a few of these reports, and I suspect this afternoon we may have the opportunity to hear of a few reports. My recollection is that a great number of these reports — there are literally hundreds of them from various agencies, boards, ministries etc — have in fact been printed and brought forward.

There are some others, some dating back to before 1990 during a Liberal government and many dating back to the NDP government, which has raised the point here today, a few dating back certainly into its term. I will say categorically that the reason there are a few reports — some from the Liberal era, some from the NDP era, a few from the current government's era — that have not been brought in is that the ministries involved, the agencies involved, have been setting priorities, have been attempting to deal with all the matters under their jurisdiction, have every intention to come forward with the report, but they simply have other matters within their jurisdiction, other more pressing matters they have to deal with.

I will give you my undertaking that we are endeavouring to encourage all the agencies, all the ministries, for all these reports, to try to raise the profile and the priority of these reports and to have them as soon as possible.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Point of order.

The Speaker: I've just got to rule on this. I kind of sense something about these reports.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): That's a rare ability you've got there, Chris.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Fort York. I didn't grow up on the south side of the tree.

I've got to say that the point of order the member opposite has raised is in order. I say to the House leader for the government that I appreciate your input, but that point of order was in order and I would suggest to the House leader that he may investigate this and other processes, because at this point in time, if they're raised subsequently, they are points of order that are in order that then must be heard.

Ms Lankin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I also rise on a point of order with respect to standing order 39(a). As you know, the ministries of the government of Ontario, as well as government's many agencies, boards and commissions, are accountable to this Legislature through the ministers of cabinet who sit opposite. Standing order 39(a) states very clearly that ministers shall present reports required by statute within six months of the closing of the report.

I am speaking with particular reference to the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. As you know, this is very topical because under the hospitals restructuring commission report there are recommendations for changes there. There is an act that governs that institution, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, which has the following filing requirement:

"26(1) The institute shall, after the close of each fiscal year, make a report on its affairs during the preceding year to the Minister of Health and to the foundation, and every such report shall contain" — this is very important information — "a financial statement, certified by the auditor, showing all money received and disbursed by the institute during the preceding year.

"(2) The Minister of Health shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

Mr Speaker, I specifically want to raise with you the report from 1995-96, which has not yet been submitted to the House. I'm not aware that the appropriate minister has provided this House with any explanation for the delay. I request that you convey to the minister, the Minister of Health in this case, the concerns of the House that the required report has not been filed.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Yesterday, in an exchange between myself and the Premier — I want to clear this matter up — he indicated that I may want to review very carefully the information I laid before the House and that

I may want to withdraw some of it at the appropriate moment. I just want to tell the House that I have reviewed what I said yesterday and I stand by everything I said in the House yesterday.

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ANNUAL REPORTS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, we have in this House many rules which ensure that the ministries of the government of Ontario, as well as the government's many agencies, boards or commissions, are accountable to this Legislature through the ministers of the cabinet.

Standing order 39(a) is the provision that I want to draw to your attention. It states very clearly, "Ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

I want to draw to your attention particularly the annual report of the University of Toronto. Under the University of Toronto Act there is a filing requirement which says: "The governing council shall make a financial report annually to the Minister of Colleges and Universities in such form and containing such information as the minister may require. The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

I would like to draw specifically to your attention, Speaker, the fact that the report for the fiscal year 1995-96 is outstanding and I'm not aware the appropriate minister has provided this House with an explanation for the delay, which is the other way in which the minister could have dealt with this. So I request that you convey to the minister my concerns and those, I hope, of the House that this particular report which is required to have been filed has not in fact been filed.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I too rise on a point of order. You know, as most of us do, that the ministries of the government as well as the many agencies, boards and commissions are accountable to this Legislature through the ministers. Standing 39(a) states very clearly, "Ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

I rise in particular reference to the annual report of the Ontario Municipal Improvement Corporation Act, a very important act, which has not yet been submitted to this House, and as far as I know, the minister has not provided this House with a reason why the report for 1995-96 has not been presented.

The filing requirement is not obscure, it's not debatable; it's very clear and it says as follows:

"The books and accounts of the corporation," and by "the corporation," we mean the Ontario Municipal Improvement Corp, "shall be audited by the Provincial Auditor or such other auditor," so it doesn't have to be the Provincial Auditor, it could be another auditor, "as the Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate and such auditor," whether it's the Provincial Auditor or some other designated auditor, "shall make an annual report of

the audit to the Treasurer" — that means Minister of Finance now I think but that standing order hasn't been amended to reflect the changes in the language of this place — "and the Treasurer shall table the report in the assembly if it is in session," such as we are now, "or, if not, at the next session," which presumably would be the fall session. We have not yet seen the report for 1995-96. That's an important omission or, if not omission, error on the part of this government and we ask your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'll alert the Minister of Finance.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Mr Speaker, I too rise on a point of order that has just been brought to my attention. In accordance with — and I have with me the standing orders, règlement. There has been an omission and I quote from article 39(a):

"Annual reports and other sessional papers

"39(a) Ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

Of course, we're talking specifically about time for presenting statutory reports. I'm appalled and shocked and very disappointed that the report dealing with the Ontario Energy Corp, which is vital for the good functioning of this House — that this information be presented within the specified period. I wish to with respect bring this to your attention. This very crucial report has yet to reach the assembly as prescribed under standing order 39(a), an offence of grave order. I know that judiciously your wisdom and your office will address this.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Point of order: As you know, Speaker, the ministries of the government of Ontario as well as many agencies, boards and commissions are accountable to this Legislature through the ministers of the cabinet.

Standing order 39(a) states very clearly, "Ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

I'm speaking in particular reference to the annual report of the council of the association in the Professional Engineers Act. Filing requirement: "The council shall make a report annually to the minister" — the Attorney General — "containing such information as the minister requires." Under 48(2), "The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report was the 1991 annual report, May 25, 1992. Outstanding is the 1995 report, which has not yet been submitted to this House. I'm not aware if the appropriate minister has provided this House with an explanation for any of the delay. Mr Speaker, I request that you convey to the minister the concern of the House that the required report has not been filed.

The Speaker: Which minister?

Mr Len Wood: The Attorney General.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Point of order.

The Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie, just give me one moment on your point of order. I appreciate the points of order. I understand 39(a). You don't have to

read the ruling every time. If you want, you can just pursue it through. I understand the point you're standing on. If it's the same or similar, you can just make your points and so on.

Mr Martin: It's important, Speaker, for me to understand as I present it to you and for folks out there to know exactly which piece of —

The Speaker: I appreciate what you're saying about the folks out there, but right now I'm concerned about the folks here and I'm just asking you — you don't need to read 39(a) any more. Go ahead.

Mr Martin: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order: As you know, the ministries of the government of Ontario, as well as the government's many agencies, boards and commissions, are accountable to this Legislature through the ministers of the cabinet.

Standing order 39(a), which is what we're standing on here, is very clear. I'm speaking in particular reference today to the annual report of the Ontario Arts Council, under the Arts Council Act, 1990.

The filing requirement is such: "The chair of the council shall annually file with the minister a report upon the affairs of the council, and the minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report that was tabled under this particular statute was the 1994-95 annual report, on July 12, 1996. I am speaking in particular reference to the annual report of the 1995-96 year, which has not been submitted to this House. I am not aware that the appropriate minister has provided this House with an explanation for this delay. Mr Speaker, I request that you convey to the minister the concerns of the House that the required report has not been filed.

The Speaker: Point of order — I'll go to the government House leader.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I have a listing of all those reports which have not been filed within the six months, and I'll read them to you, so all the members of the House I'm sure will listen and will take full accord of this.

The Speaker: Government House leader, you're going to read those reports that aren't filed? I would appreciate it if you could provide a copy for the table.

Hon David Johnson: Yes, I'll certainly provide a copy for the table.

The Farm Income Stabilization Act, which has been overdue since 1994, from the previous government —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I want to hear each and every item that's spoken to. Please don't heckle, because I'm certain there are going to be questions about which was ordered and which wasn't.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Who was the minister then?

The Speaker: Member for High Park-Swansea, I don't care who the minister was. I just want to hear this and I said no heckling, please.

Hon David Johnson: From the Ministry of the Attorney General: the Architects Act, again overdue in

1993, as well as 1994 and 1996; Courts of Justice Act, overdue in 1992-96 inclusive; Law Society Act; Ministry of Attorney General Act, overdue 1994, 1995 and 1996; Professional Engineers Act, overdue 1992-96 inclusive;

Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation: the Human Rights Code, overdue 1990-91; McMichael Canadian Art Collection Act, overdue 1995-96; Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act; Ministry of Tourism and Recreation Act; Niagara Parks Act, overdue 1996;

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Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations: Discriminatory Business Practices Act, overdue 1995-96; Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, overdue 1991, 1994, 1995 and 1996;

Ministry of Education and Training: Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Education Act (Planning and Implementation), overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Education Act (Ministries Act), overdue 1995-96; Huron College Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; An Act respecting McMaster University, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Ontario College of Art Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Act, overdue 1988-96 inclusive; Regis College Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Ryerson Polytechnical Institute Act, overdue 1993-94; School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act, overdue 1993-96; University of Toronto Act, overdue 1993-96; University of Waterloo Act, overdue 1993-96; University of Western Ontario Act, overdue 1993-96; Wilfrid Laurier University Act, overdue 1993-96;

Ministry of Environment and Energy: Ontario Energy Corporation Act, overdue 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996;

Ministry of Finance: Capital Investment Plan Act; Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act, overdue 1992-96; Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, overdue 1991, 1992, 1994 and 1996; Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act, Ontario Municipal Improvement Corporation Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Registered Insurance Brokers Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive;

Ministry of Health: Cancer Act, Ontario Cancer Institute, overdue 1992-96 inclusive; Cancer Act, Ontario Cancer Treatment Foundation, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Denture Therapists Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Health Disciplines Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Health Insurance Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Independent Health Facilities Act, overdue 1992-96 inclusive; Ministry of Health Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996; Regulated Health Professions Act;

Ministry of Labour: Ministry of Labour Act, overdue 1994, 1995, 1996;

Ministry of Municipal Affairs: Ministry of Municipal Affairs Act, overdue 1993 and 1994; Ontario Municipal Board Act, overdue 1991-96 inclusive;

Management Board: Ministry of Government Services Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Superannuation Adjustment Benefits Act, overdue 1995-96;

The last page — Ministry of Natural Resources: Ministry of Natural Resources Act, overdue 1992-96 inclusive; Surveyors Act, overdue 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1996;

Ministry of Solicitor General: Ministry of Solicitor General Act, overdue 1989-96;

Ministry of Transportation: Dangerous Goods Transportation Act, overdue 1993-96 inclusive; Ministry of Transportation and Communications Act, overdue 1995-96.

Mr Speaker, those are the lists of outstanding reports. You will see that many of them date back to about 1992 or 1993 and some back to 1988 and 1989, but it seems as if in many cases to 1992 or 1993, when the NDP was in government, the party which is expressing such great concern here this afternoon that these reports are not in. Yet it was that very party, when in government, that did not take the initiative to have these reports in.

By standing order 39(a), the minister shall present reports "unless reasons for delay are given to the House." I will give those reasons in each and every case — this list, which I will table with the Clerk's department. Those ministries have been involved in very important matters which have consumed their time.

Particularly over the last couple of years, those important matters are providing services to the people of Ontario; they are providing the business plans to guide the services that are being provided to the people of Ontario. Those activities include restructuring the ministries, a most important activity that they've been involved with over the last two years, to ensure that services are given but that the costs of each and every ministry, each and every board and commission, each and every entity on this list which is required to give a reason, each and every one of those is accomplished in an affordable fashion to deal with the \$10-billion, \$11-billion, \$12-billion deficits that we faced in the province of Ontario through many years, to deal with \$100 billion of debt. Those ministries, those agencies and commissions have been busy restructuring themselves, making themselves more efficient, bringing in their business plans, providing service to the people of Ontario.

I will further indicate to you, Mr Speaker, that we have become aware of this situation. We are in the process of communicating with each and every one of them. Notwithstanding how busy they are, notwithstanding that they have absolutely excellent reasons for where they are today, still we're going to insist that all of these reports be brought forward in due course to the satisfaction of this House.

The Speaker: To the government House leader, you're giving me your undertaking that those are all of the outstanding reports that are due to this Legislature?

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, to my knowledge, I've been presented with this list and it has been put to me that this is a complete list of all the outstanding reports. I will submit it to the Clerk's department at this point.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. Two things: First of all, on the first point of order that I raised with you, which was with respect to the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, the minister did make reference to that, but I would point out that the filing requirement that is contained in the legislation specifically refers to the Minister of Health and that the standing order dictates that the appropriate minister must give reasons to the Legislature. I do not believe we have heard reasons from the appropriate minister. We

have not had satisfaction and it is still within order to raise these to your concern.

Second, although we've not been provided with the list that the government House leader just read from — I tried to follow along closely — specifically I'd like to raise a concern again. It's under the same section. It's with respect to a report from the Facility Association. As you know, we've had changes to automobile insurance legislation in this province that directly impact on the use and the utilization of the Facility Association, and the act's filing requirement says, "The members of the board of directors and the officers and employees of the association shall furnish the commissioner with such information and financial statements with respect to the association and the plan..., and the commissioner shall make an annual report to the Minister of Financial Institutions on the affairs of the association and the minister shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled on that was in 1990-91, and that was tabled on May 6, 1993. I am raising a concern specifically with you now with respect to the annual report outstanding for 1991-92. It is not on the list, as far as I am aware, and I have a couple of others that I would like to review with you.

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Most particularly, I also want to raise the point that the reasons for the report not being tabled with the House, by the filing requirement in the act, must be given by the appropriate minister. In this case, the minister named in the filing requirement is the Minister of Financial Institutions.

I would like to proceed with a number of others, some of which the government House leader has touched on. Those which he is directly responsible for I certainly won't raise, but where other ministers are involved, I would like the opportunity to raise what I believe is a legitimate point of order.

The Speaker: To the member for Beaches-Woodbine, 39(a) speaks to filing the report or filing the reasons why you're not filing the report. What we have here is the government House leader speaking on behalf of the ministers, not on the reasons they couldn't file the report or not by filing the report, but by simply saying, "We, the government, undertake to hear this as a point of order" — your earlier ones — "and we also want to give notice to the House that we will be providing reasons or the report in the very near future."

You don't need the minister to stand up and say that; you need the minister to give you either the report or give you the reasons why they can't file the report. The government House leader is in order when he stands in his place and tells this House, "We take that notice. All these reports we take and give you notice that we will be filing reasons and the report in the very near future," and at that time the affected minister will have to be here to either file the reasons or the report.

On your Facility report: I don't believe that was part of the report offered up by the government House leader. I take that as notice and I will advise the minister to report back.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Further to the ruling that you've now made and the appreciation that we did our best to follow the number of reports the minister outlined, I believe I have one that was not mentioned. We are trying to get the list so that if we do raise any that have been mentioned, we're not duplicating that effort. But under 39(a) I would like to point out that I did not hear the —

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, I'm just going to direct the Clerk to make copies and provide them for each caucus.

Mr Christopherson: Would you like us to take a few minutes to review that or do you want hear my point of order right now?

The Speaker: I think I'd better hear your point of order right now.

Mr Christopherson: On the French Language Services Act, 1990, the filing requirements are, "The minister, after the close of each fiscal year, shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the Office of Francophone Affairs and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session." It is my understanding we have not yet received the report from the years 1995 and 1996. I would ask that you bring that to the attention of the government.

The Speaker: Done.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, I appreciate that you have clarified for me that the Facility Association was not read out by the minister. Therefore, I would like to draw to your attention, again under 39(a), that we are also concerned, particularly given the legislative changes that have happened with respect to the Facility Association review going on, that we have not seen the outstanding report for 1992-93, nor have we seen any reasons given by the appropriate minister for delay of such. I would appreciate it if you would draw that report also to the attention of the appropriate minister.

The Speaker: Done.

Mr Silipo: Speaker, I also believe there is a further valid point of order on an outstanding annual report which I didn't hear in the list from the government House leader, and that deals with the annual report of the Ontario Telephone Service Commission. The filing requirement under the Telephone Act is, "The commission shall, after the close of each calendar year, make an annual report upon the affairs of the commission to the member of the executive council to whom the administration of this act is assigned" — and I believe it's assigned to the minister of culture, tourism and recreation — "who shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

I won't repeat standing order 39(a), which we have quoted from already, but this report, at least as it relates to 1994, I believe has not been filed and I would ask that you convey to the minister the concerns of this House that the required report has not been filed.

The Speaker: Did you read the pertinent legislation when you read that in, about reporting of the telephone commission?

Mr Silipo: I did, yes.

The Speaker: There's still actively a telephone commission?

Ms Lankin: No, but the outstanding reports still need to be filed. Do you want me to tell you? I used to be the minister.

Mr Silipo: I quoted, sir, from the Telephone Act. I can tell you further to that point that the last report was tabled on June 29, 1994, and that was for 1993. There has been no report filed for 1994.

Mr Martin: In the same context, Speaker, I have a report that wasn't mentioned by the House leader in his presentation to you a few minutes ago. It's in keeping with the previous point of order, which calls for ministries of the government of Ontario as well as government agencies, boards and commissions accountable to the Legislature, through the ministers of the cabinet, to report. It falls under the Insurance Act, 1990. The filing requirement is, "At least once every two years, the minister shall table a report before the assembly in respect of the adequacy of no-fault benefits in setting out changes made to the no-fault benefits schedule since the last report and changes that are proposed to the no-fault benefits schedule at the time of the report."

The last report in this instance, a report on the no-fault benefits schedule and notice of proposed changes to the schedule, was filed on June 12, 1992. I'm speaking in particular reference to the annual report of 1993-94, which has not yet been submitted to this House. I am not aware that the appropriate minister has provided the House with an explanation for this delay. I request that you convey to the minister the concerns of the House that the required report has not in fact been filed.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is looking for a report that doesn't exist. If he had watched the Legislative Assembly over the last year or so, he would have realized that section of the act was repealed when the Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act came into force last year. I would encourage him to pay a little bit more attention to his background studies. In fact, I believe those reports have been filed with the House, and I will undertake to get them to him if he hasn't had that research from his own people.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Speaker, on the point that the minister raises: The minister ignores the fact that my colleague from Sault Ste Marie was referring to a year when the act was still in place and there should have been a report filed. According to the act, I understand it's the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relation who is responsible for making the report available and for giving the explanation; not the minister for privatization or whatever he is.

Ms Lankin: When the government House leader was reading off the long list, and although there's a copy here, I haven't yet seen it — others are looking at that — he made reference to the Wilfrid Laurier University Act, the filing requirement which says, "The board of governors shall make an annual report, including an audited financial statement, to the Minister of Colleges and Universities," which would now be the Minister of Education and Training, and the same requirements that

they must be submitted to the LG in Council and laid before the assembly.

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He specifically made reference to the report for 1995-96. I would point out to you that I actually had already risen on a point of order and had made reference to that specific year. When the minister read that one, he did not list any other years. I would like to raise a concern of the report —

The Speaker: For 1996, he did list.

Ms Lankin: The report hasn't been audited —

The Speaker: We recorded at the clerks' table that he listed 1993-96.

Ms Lankin: Then I would raise a concern with respect to 1992.

The Speaker: May I stand, though? I want to deal with the nub of this.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, I think it's better if we just not heckle at this point in time. I appreciate what is going on. I would ask that the third party take their legitimate points of order and list the ones that you have left. I will hear them and direct the ministers to respond to those points of order. If you all have different ones, then I suggest you stand individually and list the ones you have left and I'll be happy to refer them to the ministers and ask that they report back.

It obviously will facilitate a speedier process. I understand that may not be the idea, but with the greatest respect, it seems to me that if I let you stand up individually and list whatever ones you have left, you can do that one at a time through the caucus and then we can move on.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, the difficulty with your suggestion is that we have been provided by the table with one copy of the minister's list and we did try to follow it through when he gave it orally. It is a little difficult for us to comply with your suggestion at this point because there are some who believe that they may have particular reports that were not referred to by the minister. We've already had a couple of examples of that.

The minister can give his assurances that his list covers them all, but the fact is that we don't know that it covers them all.

The Speaker: Okay, member for Algoma, then I will give you the latitude of listing all of them. Whether or not they were covered by the government House leader, you may in fact list all of them so you'll be certain that you won't miss any. That should solve the problem.

Mr Wildman: All right. I have a point of order regarding standing order 39(a) which relates to the Education Act: The minister did say the Ministry of Education Act, but I didn't hear if he listed the particular years about which I'm concerned. The outstanding reports of the Education Act which the minister is required to provide at the close of each fiscal year to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the immediately preceding fiscal year have not been provided for 1994-95 or 1995-96.

The Speaker: Is that all, member for Algoma?

Mr Wildman: The Planning and Implementation Commission of the Ministry of Education under the Education Act: "The commission" — that is the Planning

and Implementation Commission — “shall make an annual report to the minister and the minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session.”

The last report was 1991-92, which was tabled on December 13, 1993. So the question is, where are the reports for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96?

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: I have not reviewed this against the list, so the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry — I raise with you concerns with respect to the report from 1995-96. The last report that was actually tabled was the 1992-93 annual report, which was tabled on March 16, 1994. I would like to raise concerns with respect to the outstanding reports for 1993-94 and 1994-95. I believe you have already instructed me about the Wilfrid Laurier University, all years, so I will skip that one.

I'd like to raise a concern with respect to the Ontario Municipal Board and the Ontario Municipal Board Act. The filing requirement: “The board shall, after the close of each calendar year, make an annual report upon the affairs of the board to the Attorney General who shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session.”

The last report tabled was the 1990-91 annual report. That was tabled on August 23, 1991. I wish to bring to your attention my concern with respect to the outstanding reports of 1991-92, 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Also under standing order 39(a), I would like to raise my concern with respect to the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Labour Act. The filing requirement says, “The minister shall after the close of each fiscal year submit an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next ensuing session.”

The last report which was tabled was the 1992-93 annual report. That was tabled on February 23, 1995. There are outstanding reports of 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Also with respect to standing order 39(a), I would like to raise a concern with respect to the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of the Attorney General Act. The filing requirement reads, “The Attorney General after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next ensuing session.”

The last report tabled was the 1993-94 annual report, which was tabled on January 31, 1995. I wish to raise concerns with respect to the outstanding reports of 1994-95 and 1995-96.

I have raised with you concerns about the Facility Association, which is under the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act, 1990, the filing requirement being, “The members of the board of directors and the officers and employees of the association shall furnish the commissioner with such information and financial statements

with respect to the association and the plan..., and the commissioner shall make an annual report to the Minister of Financial Institutions on the affairs of the association and the minister shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session.”

As I indicated to you, the last report tabled was for 1990-91, and that was tabled on May 6, 1993. I have already raised concerns with respect to the reports from 1991-92 and 1992-93. I wish now to raise concerns with respect to the reports from 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. That is the entirety of the list that I have at this point.

Mr Silipo: Speaker, taking your suggestion or your direction, I would like to bring to your attention a number of annual reports which I believe have not been filed nor are included in the list that the government House leader has indicated. One in particular deals with the filing requirement under the Municipal Act, which states: “The treasurer of every municipality shall in each year within the time prescribed by the ministry make a return to the ministry on forms provided by it of such information and statistics with respect to the financial affairs, accounts and transactions of the municipality as the ministry may prescribe, and every such return shall be transmitted by registered mail.... The ministry shall cause to be prepared annually a tabulated statement of the returns which shall be laid before the assembly.”

I realize that the Minister of Municipal Affairs may have been busy with other activities, but the truth, as I understand it, is that the last report filed was the 1994 Municipal Financial Information report. That was tabled on January 7, 1997. But reports are still outstanding with respect to the year 1995. I would draw that to your attention and ask that you convey to the minister the concerns of the House that the required report has not been filed.

I further would like to draw to your attention the 1995 annual report of the Ontario Telephone Service Commission. I noted earlier that the 1994 report of that commission had not been filed. The 1995 report has, to my understanding, also not been filed, and that of course is a requirement of the Telephone Act.

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The filing requirement stated under that legislation is, “The commission shall, after the close of each calendar year, make an annual report upon the affairs of the commission to the member of the executive council to whom the administration of this act is assigned” — my understanding is that that is the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Recreation — “who shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session.”

That relates to the 1995 annual report. I would ask that you convey to the minister the concerns of the House that the required report has not been filed.

I believe, following the Speaker's request, that, from the list I have, covers the outstanding annual reports.

Mr Laughren: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I mentioned earlier in these proceedings that the reports under the Ontario Municipal Improvement Corporation Act, 1995-96, had not been tabled. As you are aware, the

ministries, as well as their agencies, boards and commissions, are required to table annual reports in the assembly.

As a matter of fact, the standing order is very specific. It states that "ministers shall present all reports required by statute within six months of the close of the reporting period unless reasons for delay are given to the House."

I mentioned 1995-96, but I can tell you that the report for the Ontario Municipal Improvement Corporation Act has not been tabled for 1995-96, as I said earlier, but nor has it has been tabled for 1994-95 or 1993-94.

You know, as we do, that the filing requirement is very clear and states, "The books and accounts of the corporations to be audited by the Provincial Auditor or such other auditor as the Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate and such auditor shall make an annual report of the audit to the Treasurer, and the Treasurer shall table the report in the assembly if it is session or, if not, at the next session."

I also am concerned about the Ministry of the Solicitor General Act. As you know, ministries are governed under acts, and the Solicitor General was supposed to, "after the close of each year...submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next...session." The last report tabled, and this is surprising to me, was 1988, which means there's been no report tabled for either 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 or 1995. That of course is not appropriate nor acceptable, and I trust that will be looked after.

As well, we have the Law Foundation of Ontario, which operates under the Law Society Act. That report, I believe, has also not been tabled for the year 1995. It was tabled for 1994 on December 1, 1995. But the last year, 1995, should have been tabled by now, and it has not been done.

Finally, the College Relations Commission, which is still in existence, operates under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, and the commission is supposed to annually prepare a report on the affairs of that commission for the preceding year and the report should be tabled in the Legislature. The last report that was tabled was 1991-92, and that was tabled on June 24, 1994. There are still outstanding reports from the College Relations Commission for 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I don't understand why the government would not have tabled the report for the preceding years as well as 1995-96.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Mr Speaker, on your advice, I'm going to read out some of the reports I have an interest in. I'm not sure if they were read out or not. I did have a look at the list, but I forgot my glasses. I saw some of them and I just want to confirm these.

One is the Ontario Place Corp, and the act is the Ontario Place Corporation Act. The filing requirement says, "The corporation shall make a report annually to the minister upon the affairs of the corporation and the minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council," and that has not been done yet.

The last tabled report, the annual report for the year ending March 31, 1994, was tabled on April 16, 1997.

The outstanding reports are — and this is where I'm not sure of the dates which were read out here — for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Another one that I have a great deal of interest in is quite far behind, and that is the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act. The filing requirement is this: "The minister after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled for the Ministry of Citizenship was the 1992-93 annual report, tabled on March 25, 1994. The outstanding reports are for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I would appreciate hearing from the Minister of Citizenship and Culture why these reports have not been filed and if she could make those available.

Another one is the Board of Funeral Services, which we all in this place have an interest in, a great deal of interest, and the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, 1990. The filing requirements for this say, "The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations shall submit the annual report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled, the 1993 annual report, was tabled on July 27, 1994, but the outstanding reports are 1994 and 1995. I would ask the minister responsible for the Board of Funeral Services if he could make those very important reports available, and perhaps he could explain why they have not been filed yet.

My last one —

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Well, the Board of Funeral Services is a very important report.

The Speaker: I would like to hear your last one.

Ms Churley: My last one is from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health Act. The filing requirement: "The minister after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled, the 1992-93 annual report, was tabled on July 8, 1994. The outstanding reports are 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I realize the Minister of Health has been very busy, but I would suggest that he get these reports to us.

Mr Len Wood: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Standing order 39(a), as you've heard, states very clearly that there's a filing requirement under the Professional Engineers Act. I know the government House leader mentioned one of the reports that has been filed, but I didn't hear him mention the outstanding reports of 1995, 1994, 1993 and 1992. The last report that was filed, the 1991 report, was tabled on May 25, 1992. There's a concern on this side of the House that the reports are not coming forward.

I know that you would have a concern under 39(a) as well, on the Ministry of Government Services Act, that there's a filing requirement: "The minister, after the close

of each year, shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

I heard the government House leader mention one particular year, but the last one I have a record of is the 1991 annual report, which was tabled on September 29, 1992. So as to the 1995-96 report, I'm not aware that the minister has tabled that in the House or given an explanation of why it was not tabled. There's also concern about the 1994-95 report and the 1993-94 report, and also the 1992-93 report. It's a concern of the caucus that we would like you to look into this and make sure it is taken care of.

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The Speaker: I appreciate that. Do you have any more?

Mr Len Wood: No. Thank you.

Mr Martin: Mr Speaker, I have a number of reports that haven't been tabled in my estimation, or at least it's my —

The Speaker: Let's hear them.

Mr Martin: Paying attention to the House leader, I didn't hear them reported. I'm slow.

The Speaker: Oh no, you're not. You can go ahead.

Mr Martin: It takes a little while. It's really important that the rules of order of this place be followed and that reports from agencies and ministries that are out there be tabled, so I have one from the Ministry of Natural Resources, under the Ministry of Natural Resources Act, that hasn't been tabled. The filing requirement: "The minister after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next ensuing session."

The last report tabled under this act was the 1991 annual report, tabled on July 2, 1992. It's our understanding that there are outstanding reports for the years 1991-92, 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96, and it would be helpful to us if you were to send a message to that particular minister, the Minister of Natural Resources, that he have these reports tabled —

The Speaker: I appreciate that, yes.

Mr Martin: — or if he can't have them tabled, that he give a reason for their not being tabled to the House so that we all are on the same page in that book.

The Speaker: I understand.

Mr Martin: Also, the Ontario Cancer Institute, under the Cancer Act, 1990. The filing requirement: "The institute shall after the close of each fiscal year make a report upon its affairs during the preceding year to the Minister of Health and every such report shall contain a financial statement" —

Mr Shea: You raised that one; he mentioned that.

Mr Martin: Yes, he mentioned it, but he didn't mention all of the years.

The Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, I'd like you to direct your comments to me and what years you're concerned about with reporting of the Cancer Society.

Mr Pouliot: This is the Cancer Society.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: We're all on a waiting list, Speaker. The Cancer Society.

The Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, direct your comments through me. Do not listen to the heckles. I caution the member for High Park-Swansea.

Mr Martin: I was trying to be helpful to the member for High Park-Swansea and explaining to him —

The Speaker: I appreciate that. I'd just like to hear what the years you're concerned about are.

Mr Martin: I tried, member for High Park-Swansea, to be helpful to you, but anyway, to get back to the business at hand —

Mr Shea: I'll get back to you later.

Mr Martin: Okay. The filing requirement: "The institute shall after the close of each fiscal year make a report upon its affairs during the preceding year to the Minister of Health and every such report shall contain a financial statement certified by the auditor, showing all money received and disbursed by the institute during the preceding year" — that's the year that went before.

"The Minister of Health shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly" — that's us gathered here — "if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled in this instance was the 1991 annual report, which was tabled on November 25, 1993. Our concern is —

Mr Shea: Were you the PA then?

Mr Martin: No, not in this particular ministry.

Our concern is that reports are outstanding for the years 1991-92 —

Mr Shea: That was your government, right?

Mr Martin: Yes — the years 1992-93, 1993-94 — now we're moving into a new government, which I believe is your government — and 1994-95 and 1995-96. I would ask the Speaker to please ask of the government, and in this instance the Minister of Health, that he report back to the House why these reports have not been tabled. That would be, I believe, very helpful to all of us here. I think that's all for me.

The Speaker: Thank you so much.

Mr Christopherson: Further to your ruling, Speaker, the list of reports that I have concerns about in terms of not being tabled under 39(a) would go as follows:

The Ministry of Transportation and Communications Act, 1990 — the filing requirements are, "The minister after the close of each year shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the ministry and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled was the 1993-94 annual report, which was tabled on March 15, 1995, and the outstanding reports would be the years 1994-95 and 1995-96.

The next group of reports I have concerns about and would ask you to raise with the appropriate minister refer to the Registered Insurance Brokers Act. The filing requirements are, "The superintendent shall make an annual examination of the affairs of the corporation and shall report concerning the examination to the minister and the minister shall then lay the annual report of the corporation and the report of the superintendent before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last tabled report, Speaker, was the 1993 annual report. It was tabled on June 22, 1994, and I believe this House is still due the 1994 and the 1995 reports.

Further concerns that I have are with regard to the University of Western Ontario Act. The filing requirements for this particular act are: "The board of governors shall make a financial report annually to the Minister of Colleges and Universities in such form and containing such information as the minister may require. The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled was the combined financial statements, 1991-92, and that was tabled on December 3, 1992. We are still awaiting the reports from 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Next, Speaker, I draw to your attention my concerns around the filing requirements under the Huron College Act of 1975. Those filing requirements are: "The executive board shall make a financial report annually to the minister in such a form and containing such information as the minister may require. The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report was tabled on October 21, 1992, and that was in the report and financial statements of April 30, 1992. We are still owed reports for the years 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Next, Speaker, I draw to your attention filing requirements under the Ontario Colleges of Art Act. Those requirements are as follows: "The council shall at the close of each fiscal year file with the Minister of Colleges and Universities an annual report upon the affairs of the college." Later it states, "The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled was the financial statements, May 31, 1992, and that was tabled on November 4, 1992. This House is still awaiting the reports of 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I would ask you to bring that to the attention of the appropriate minister.

Next, Speaker, I have concerns about annual reports due under the Denture Therapists Act. The filing requirements there are, "The appeal board shall...submit an annual report on its activities to the minister which shall include such additional information as the minister may require and the minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The last report tabled was the 1993 annual report, which was tabled on February 9, 1995. We still await the 1994 and 1995 reports.

1510

Further to a point of order I raised with you earlier under the French Language Services Act, 1990, you'll recall, Speaker, that the filing requirements are that: "The minister, after the close of each fiscal year, shall submit to the Lieutenant Governor in Council an annual report upon the affairs of the Office of Francophone Affairs and

shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

Speaker, as I raised with you earlier, the last report tabled was the 1993-94 annual report, which was tabled on March 27, 1995. I would bring to your attention that we are still awaiting the report of 1994-95.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish the honourable member for Hamilton Centre would get his facts straight. I have here a report which says, "Office of Francophone Affairs, Annual Report, 1994-95, 1995-96," and I would say that this member owes the staff of francophone affairs an apology. We have the goods right here.

Mr Wildman: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker: I know what your point of order is.

Ms Lankin: It hasn't been tabled.

The Speaker: Are you certain that has been tabled?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It has gone to the —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York.

Mr Pouliot: On a point of personal privilege, sir.

Interjection.

The Speaker: That's very true. I'm already listening to a point of order. I can't possibly take your point of privilege while I'm listening to a point of order. Point of order, member for Fort York, but I will wait to hear it.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur le Président, I only have a few acts to which I will refer.

The Independent Health Facilities Act, 1990: "The minister" — as you know, under the filing requirements — "shall annually prepare a report on the implementation of this act and submit it to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The annual report for the 20-month period ending December 31, 1991, was tabled on July 14, 1992. We still have outstanding reports for the years 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995.

The next act is the University of Waterloo Act. Under the filing requirement, the board of governors "shall make a financial report annually to the Minister of Colleges and Universities in such form and containing such information as the minister may require. The minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The financial statements, April 30, 1992, was tabled on November 4, 1993. We're still waiting for the reports of 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

The next act is the Superannuation Adjustment Benefits Act. Under the filing requirement, the adjustment fund "shall be audited by the Provincial Auditor who shall make an annual report to the Treasurer of Ontario, and the Treasurer shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if it is not, at the next...session."

The financial statements for the year ended March 31, 1994, was tabled on November 9, 1994. We're still waiting for reports of 1994-95 and 1995-96.

The next act is the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act. Under the filing requirement, "The public accounts for each fiscal year shall be prepared under the direction of the Treasurer and shall be delivered to the Lieutenant Governor and laid before the assembly not later than the 10th day of the first session held in the following...year."

The 1994-95 public accounts, volumes 1, 2 and 3, were tabled on October 2, 1995. We're still waiting for the report of 1995-96.

Another act is the Health Disciplines Act. The filing requirement for that is that: "The board shall...submit an annual report on its activities to the minister which shall include such additional information as the minister may require and the minister shall submit the report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and shall then lay the report before the assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The 1993 annual report was tabled on February 9, 1995, and the outstanding reports are of 1994 and 1995.

The final one, Mr Speaker, you'll be happy to know, is the Dangerous Goods Transportation Act, 1990. The filing requirement for that is, "The minister shall, as soon as possible, after the end of each year, prepare and cause to be laid before the Legislature a report on the administration and enforcement of this act for that year."

The 1991-92 annual report was tabled on July 14, 1992, and we're waiting for the other reports of 1992-93, 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. I thank you for your attention, Mr Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday I took some time to point out to you that you have a serious credibility problem in Ontario when it comes to education. I said that, based on your record, Ontarians don't trust you with the education of their children, and of course you said I was wrong.

Today we learn that your own poll shows that you, Minister, have the least credibility of all the players in the education system. People said that when it comes to students, parents, teachers, trustees and you, it was you who earned the ranking of the least credible of all. On top of that, the government paid \$53,000 to find that out. I told him that yesterday for free.

Minister, I'm going to give you another chance. Given the long list of unanswered questions about your school takeover bill and given the damage you have already done to classrooms and students, tell us once again, why should you be trusted with our children's education?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): It's odd to have in this House the Leader of the Opposition represent something in what I think is a fair way, and I believe he just did. The poll does indicate that among the bottom of the barrel in terms of public trust are politicians. That has been borne out in poll after poll, federally, provincially, in every province across this

country for many, many years, and it's no different in Ontario. I believe that should be of concern to those of us who work in this Legislature.

I think one of the reasons that politicians are not held in much trust is because politicians say things like: "We have an obligation to consider it. We can't back away from the prospects of amalgamation. As Liberals, we're fiscally responsible. We've got to look at that when we talk about amalgamation."

The Leader of the Opposition was the person who made that quote, yet he has stood in this House day after day after day and attacked a bill that does just that. That's why the people of Ontario don't trust politicians, because people like the Leader of the Opposition flip-flop on this issue —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I guess the minister doesn't have an answer, but I'll remind the minister that he was the one who cut education in this province by at least \$500 million; he's the one who suggested that he could find another \$1 billion in savings in education; he's the guy who forced 25 boards in Ontario to cut junior kindergarten; he's the guy who forced 23 boards to make cuts to special education; and he's the guy who forced boards to cut staff and increase class sizes. He's in the driver's seat. I'm not in the driver's seat.

Trust is something you earn and here's a way you can start to earn it: Tell us how much you plan to spend on our students once your school takeover bill is passed. Can you do that very simple thing, Minister? Will you give us right now your funding formula for schools once Bill 104 is passed?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's nice to see the Leader of the Opposition return to his normal form of distorting things. 1520

The Speaker: "Distortion" I think is a word that is too closely aligned with "misleading" etc. I would ask you to withdraw "distortion."

Hon Mr Snobelen: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker. Let me just say that the Leader of the Opposition is wrong in his assertions that he has just put before this Legislature. I won't take them on one at a time; he can keep asking, if he'd like, and I can take those on.

What we have done as a government is what we promised the people of Ontario in the Common Sense Revolution. We continue to build a better system of education. We continue, in direct answer to his question, to fix the problems left by your government, left by the previous government, in a funding model that no one likes, that no one has recommended, that treats students in Ontario as second-class citizens based on where they live. We think that's unfair.

We are bringing in an allocation model that will fund every student's need in this province of Ontario, fund them fairly and give them an equal opportunity. We intend to consult broadly with the education sector and make sure that our allocation model is one that will meet the needs of those individual students, because we believe in listening to the people of Ontario, particularly listening to the people who deliver education.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to allow the minister to pick whichever of these he feels represents a distortion, to use his word: Did he or did he not cut education in this province by at least \$400 million? Did he or did he not suggest that he could find another \$1 billion in savings in education? Did he or did he not force 25 boards to cut junior kindergarten? Did he or did he not force 23 boards to make cuts to special education? Did he or did he not force boards throughout the province to cut staff and increase class sizes?

This man asks for our trust, but I tell you, entrusting the welfare of our children to him would be like you, Speaker, asking Dr Kevorkian to look after your mother and make sure she's okay.

One more time, Minister, prove to us today that you're worthy of the trust of people who are involved in education in this province by telling us you're going to restore funding for adult education, guidance, junior kindergarten and all the other programs —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: That is one of the saddest performances I've seen in this Legislature. The answer to your question, whatever it is, is no, that this government has kept its promises to the people of Ontario. We are moving forward now to have higher standards —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury and member for Kenora, please come to order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: There is a reason that is such a sad performance; that is, once again it misrepresents what's been done by this government, misrepresents the directions of this government, and it also interjects what I think is just a complete misrepresentation of the facts as they are and what we need to do in education in the province of Ontario.

We need higher student achievement. It's not all right with this government that we have mediocre results from our students. We think we need to make investments in the classroom, we think we need to help teachers and we think we need to lift student achievement. We have to do that by having higher standards in each and every grade, by having a clear province-wide curriculum, by making the investment on behalf of taxpayers that will pay off in the lives of those students.

It's a serious subject for this government, one we're committed to, and we're getting on with that business with Bill 104 and other changes. I'm proud of our record on education and I'm willing to debate it anywhere in this province with the Leader of the Opposition.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My next question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, yesterday I asked you why, in this time of crisis for children in Ontario who are having to contend with abuse, you had allowed 340 full-time staff to be laid off from Ontario's children's aid societies, and you had no answer.

According to the Child Welfare League of America, a child protection worker's caseload should consist of a maximum of 17 active families per month. That's an

absolute maximum. Obviously, I made the assumption that you had laid off those 340 workers because workers in Ontario could deal with the caseloads they presently have.

Let me tell you what I found. I found that in your own riding of Durham, the average case worker handles 28 families a month. The absolute maximum is 17, but the children's aid society workers in your riding handle 28. That's 64% more than the established maximum. I also found out that the children's aid society in your riding has laid off 27 staff members because of funding cuts.

Minister, I want you to tell me that in the upcoming budget you are going to, at minimum, return the \$17 million you stole from Ontario children's aid societies.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As the honourable member across the way well knows, the children's aid societies make the decisions. They are empowered to make the decisions in terms of what their staff should be, what their budget allocations are. This government does not dictate or say to children's aid societies the number of people they should be employing.

Second, as the honourable member is well aware, we have a special contingency fund for children's aid societies which has been there for many years and which continues to be there so that if they do need extra assistance, it is there to help support them.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, the ultimate responsibility for these children lies with you, and nobody else should feel that weight in quite the same way you should. Nobody is here to ensure more than you are that Ontario's kids grow up safe from neglect and abuse. By not restoring funding to CASs, by not offering them the tools they require to protect kids, you're sentencing those kids, you're condemning them, to lives of misery and pain.

Listen to this: 80% of all female prisoners today in Ontario jails are victims of child physical or sexual abuse. Child prostitution prevention programs for ages nine and up find that 99% have a history of child abuse. Suicide prevention programs find that children with a history of sexual abuse are 10 times more likely to attempt suicide.

These kids need you, and they need you now. They need you to stand up for them and give the children's aid societies the tools they need: money, staff and, most important, your own undying support.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member well knows that throwing money at any problem is not going to solve any problem. What the children's aid workers are saying, what the families are saying, what the police and the court workers and the professionals are saying is that we need better information supports for the staff, we need better training for the staff, we need resources that are in the right place at the right time, we need better intervention and prevention.

All of those things this ministry either has under way or has already done, and we are looking forward to the recommendations of the task force when they are complete so we can continue to improve the system.

Mr McGuinty: Today in Ontario several children will be physically abused. They'll be punched or kicked, they'll suffer cigarette burns, they'll be violently shaken, they'll be sexually assaulted, and most of them will be under the age of five. These kids don't know your name — they don't even know you exist — and they don't understand anything about this Parliament and of course none of them are going to contact us. But if you and I could talk to them and if we could make them understand and were able to bring them into a room, what do you think they would ask for? Do you think they'd ask for adequate funding to make them safe or do you think they'd ask for a tax cut?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, I appreciate the honourable member's concern about this. Every Minister of Community and Social Services, whether Liberal, NDP or Conservative, has faced the challenge of children in care or supervision of children's aid societies who die. I don't think it's important to sit here and argue over whose watch or whose fault. I think it's important to ask, how did the system fail these children?

What the recommendations from the task force report and the coroners' testimony have indicated, what the Toronto Star articles have indicated, is that there are many problems in the system. Those problems need to be addressed, and that is why this government is doing what it is doing for more money for intervention and prevention, why we're doing more investment in better tools for those workers to support them, all kinds of steps that we are taking to improve this system, because the system has indeed failed these children. We quite recognize that. I'm not going to sit here and play political games with the member opposite. I want to get on with the job of fixing the system.

1530

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question was for Monsieur Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but I understand he couldn't wait and had to leave, so I'll direct my question to the government House leader.

Minister, your attempt to get a backroom deal with handpicked municipal leaders isn't working, not as far as we can tell. Your dealings are so secret that you won't even tell the Association of Municipalities of Ontario when the meetings are being held, yet all your backroom dealing will cost taxpayers well over \$1 billion in public health costs, long-term care, housing costs and social service costs. People don't want this. All over Ontario nobody wants it. Even your own allies, like the board of trade, don't want this. You are about to whack homeowners and tenants with a big tax increase. Do you believe this is wise?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I certainly wouldn't believe it would be wise to hit any property owners in the province with a tax increase. That's why we're headed exactly in the opposite direction. What we fully intend to happen as the result of the services being rationalized between two levels of government, some services going to the municipal level, the

huge cost of education coming off the property tax — that represents well over \$5 billion this year and it's going up at the rate of over 5% a year, so it will soon be \$6 billion that's been taken off the property tax of residential taxpayers. That, in my submission, will allow the municipalities the room to take over the other services. In fact, what we should see because of that and because of other tools municipalities are getting —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: — we will see a reduction in property taxes in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Durham East, thank you for your intervention, but heckling is out of order.

Mr Marchese: We are not going to see reductions in property taxes. The minister says we're taking education off the property tax, but he's about to whack them with additional costs connected to housing, child care, welfare, long-term care, public health and so many other services that you're downloading to the municipal taxpayer, to the property homeowner and the tenants.

You have, with pompous authority, forced the megacity against the express wishes of Metropolitan Toronto, and you're going to do the same on the downloading, only this time it is every single taxpayer across Ontario who will pay. If some of your backbenchers look nervous from time to time, it's because it's going to cost their constituents over \$400 per household; they know that, and you know that.

Civil servants tell us that's just the beginning. The transition costs, costs you have not accounted for, will amount to over \$229 million, and that does not include severance costs. Minister, why should taxpayers pay over \$229 million in —

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Management Board chair?

Hon David Johnson: I would say there's one important word in this whole exercise, and that word is "accountability." What is happening is that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has come forward with a proposition whereby the accountability rests with a level of government. Library services, for example, which were partially funded by the province and partially by municipalities, will now be funded by municipalities; total accountability will rest there. Police services, partially funded municipally, partially funded provincially; total accountability at the municipal level. The cost of education will be totally taken off the residential property tax; total accountability will go to the province of Ontario.

What happens is a basic principle of government: When you have the accountability, you have efficiency and you have effectiveness, and those who steward that particular budget do a better job of it, and costs go down and the service level goes up. That's exactly what we'll get when this new disentangled system is put in place next year.

Mr Marchese: People expected you to take the costs of welfare off the municipal taxpayer. That's clarity. They did not ask you to pay for the long-term care through the property tax, they did not ask you to pay for housing through property tax, they did not ask you to pay for welfare through the property tax. They didn't ask you

to do any of that. That was the clarity that municipalities wanted, and you have confused them now with a greater burden, and not only confused them, you have added an extra burden to the taxpayer, to the homeowner and to the tenant.

Ask your caucus members what this will mean to them, because each and every one of those homeowners is going to be paying over \$400. They are nervous, and they should be, because that is the implication of your download. If you ask them, you will find that they will urge you not to do this. Will you withdraw this bill that's going to increase property taxes for everyone across Ontario, or are you going to be foolhardy and not listen to that either?

Hon David Johnson: I would say to the member opposite that there is already welfare on the property tax. There is already a cost-sharing formula. Welfare today is on the property tax in various formulas. Health care today: Part of health care is on the property tax, public health. Housing: A portion of housing is already on the property tax today. What is being proposed here is not new. What is being proposed is a more accountable formula, a more accountable system.

Beyond that, I will say that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is proposing a permanent \$1-billion fund to assist municipalities and a restructuring capital fund of \$800 million to assist municipalities during this transition period. This will be a more accountable system. It will work. It will result in lower property taxes.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, CULTURE AND RECREATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. This question is about broken promises. In a recent article in the Hamilton Spectator, staff from your office indicated with respect to your government's promise to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and I'm quoting from that article, "that the government is not sold on the value of an overarching act and that the legislation might be impractical," and further, "that instead of a law, the government is looking at general policy." This is despite Mr Harris's explicit, in-writing commitment to persons with disabilities that there would be an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Today I received further evidence of this broken promise, and this is a leaked cabinet document from your ministry. It's entitled "Overview of Citizenship Directions." It forms part of your ministry's submissions to Management Board for estimates. In that, with respect to access, it indicates that you're moving from barrier-free access to community services for seniors and persons with disabilities to barrier-free within the equal opportunity plan, voluntary. Why are you breaking your promise to enact a law, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): In answer to the honourable member's question, let me remind the honourable member what the Premier did say. What the Premier said was that we as a government are willing to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within the financial goalposts of this

government and that we would be willing to do it in our first year. We have not broken any such commitments; in fact, we are still working with the disabled community to bring some kind of framework forward to protect the interests of Ontarians with disabilities.

Ms Lankin: Well, I have a letter here from the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee to you which doesn't indicate that they think you're working with them, and I have a leaked cabinet document in which your priorities for 1996-97 and 1997-98 are set out. Nowhere does it mention that you are working on an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It is not in your priorities. It is not in your ministry work plan as set out here.

1540

Furthermore, it indicates that you are looking at moving away from things like distinct programs targeted on prevention of violence against women with disabilities and also racial minority women, where you had two distinct programs. That says you're moving to program rationalization. Despite the fact that the minister responsible for women's issues said there would be no cuts, you're going to move away from distinct programs.

Also, we've had a court ruling in the last week that has questioned what is going on with the declaration of mental incompetence for persons with disabilities, because you have done away with rights advisers. There's nowhere in this work plan and in your priorities that says that you're going to help get rights advice for these people.

Why are you abandoning persons with disabilities? It is clear throughout this leaked document. Minister, stand up for those —

Hon Ms Mushinski: Let me reassure the honourable member that my government remains committed to removing barriers for persons with disabilities. The latest initiative we have undertaken is to contract with the Roehrer Institute to conduct an evaluation study of the overall impact to date and the implementation costs of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Once we get the results back to that, we'll have a better idea of how to framework an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Minister, you can continue not to answer the questions, but I think that speaks volumes. I remind you that this leaked document that comes from your own ministry is entitled Overview of Citizenship Directions. It sets out your priorities in the ministry for the next two years. My colleague from Beaches-Woodbine has already mentioned what's been missing or what is missing from that document.

I want to refer you to another thing that is also very clearly missing from the citizenship priorities, and that is that there is no reference to any anti-racism activities which have traditionally been within your ministry. We know that your government has ended the Anti-Racism Secretariat. There's nothing to replace it. There's no reference to anti-racism, the programs, to any kinds of initiatives. There is nothing that deals with how you are going to carry out your responsibility to fight racial discrimination.

The document, quite frankly, Minister, lays bare the depth of your government's commitment to anti-racism initiatives. It just isn't there. There is no commitment. So can you tell us why there's nothing in your priority document on anti-racism?

Hon Ms Mushinski: In response to the honourable member's question, let me tell you that racism and discrimination are against the law in this province. The Ontario Human Rights Commission is the body to deal effectively with incidents of racism and discrimination, and we are strengthening the role of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. If anyone is committed to eradicating racism and discrimination from this province, this government is.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, clearly the opposition, the people of Ontario, the students, the teachers and the parents of Ontario feel that Bill 104 will continue the erosion of quality education in Ontario. There's absolutely no question about that.

I read with interest today an editorial where you pledged to regulate smaller class sizes in elementary grades in Ontario. I read with interest a response to a concerned parent in Ontario where you said, "Studies indicate that smaller class sizes do not affect the quality of education after grade 3."

Minister, I have 30 years in elementary schools, so I know that elementary school goes from JK to grade 8. What do you mean by regulating class sizes and when are you going to regulate them?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): My education record has been criticized, but I want to assure the member opposite that I did not spend 30 years in elementary school.

I do think that class size is a concern and I don't want to make light of that. I believe we have to have a look at how we can control class size. There was a growth in class size in Ontario as a result of the social contract. That's a document that deliberately set out to increase class size in the province. That's not all right with my colleagues and it's not all right with myself.

We are looking at ways that we can assure the quality of education, and one of those quality measures, particularly in the early grades, is class size. So we are now looking at and examining with other people in education how we might do that and still retain some flexibility at the local level.

Mr Bartolucci: There are some places a minister shouldn't go, and talking about spending 30 years in elementary school is not one of them. I spent eight as a student and the rest as a teacher, so I would suggest to you that we not compare records about schooling.

Let me tell you, you have the process already. We have Bill 110, the School Class Sizes Act, which has received support from all three parties, that has been referred to the social development committee. I want to know, when will you tell your House leader that you want that bill called to committee so that we can debate in a meaningful way smaller class sizes?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the honourable member for clarifying his earlier statement.

We are looking at the private member's bill. Certainly the intent of it is consistent with our intent. However, I have talked to principals and others in our school system who want to make sure that whatever way we regulate class size works for them from a scheduling point of view; that we don't put a regulation forward or part of legislation that will not allow them the kind of local flexibility they need. As principals have pointed out to me, if they don't have some flexibility in local scheduling, they often have split classes, and there are those who believe that's not good for the education of children.

We're talking to people who are in the classrooms, to people who are in charge of making the education system work. We want to make sure that whatever regulations we bring forward work in their best interests and the students' best interests. So we'll continue to do that, and I thank you for bringing it forward today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): If scheduling is the problem, we'd be quite willing to have it brought to committee immediately. Whatever you like; we're willing to go that way today.

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to ask a question of the Minister of Education and Training. It's in regard to the draft guidelines for the so-called Education Improvement Commission. One of the amendments the government made to Bill 104 was to remove the EIC's retroactive approval of school boards' 1997 budgets.

The draft guidelines quote the bill and say with regard to the question of reserve funds, "From the day Bill 104 receives royal assent to December 31, 1997, an existing board shall not transfer money between or among reserves or reserve funds or change the purpose or designation of a reserve or reserve fund without prior approval of the commission."

However, immediately under that, in the guidelines, the EIC says, "From 1997, reserve funds and reserves for working funds should remain at the levels reported in the boards' 1996 financial statements." In essence, the EIC is reinstituting the retroactivity —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

Mr Wildman: — which isn't right, because they do it up to now or not —

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, we appreciate it. Thank you for your question. Minister of Education.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I find it surprising that the member for Algoma would rise on that matter today in this House. The member must have heard from people in the education community. There were trustees in this building today, there were parents in this building today, there were students in this building today who were pleading for the passage of Bill 104 because they want the Education Improvement Commission up and running. They want to make a smooth transition from an old system where there were inequities in the funding to a new

system where we focus our finances on the students and teachers in this province and where we have a fair funding model for each and every student.

Yet today the member for Algoma has, I believe, delayed the House beginning question period. They've delayed the passage of this bill, or at least attempted to delay the passage of this bill this day, I think; and in the past the filibuster on Bill 103 took up more time in this Legislature than your government spent in the last year of your government in this Legislature and in the proper legislative fashion. I find it absolutely unbelievable that you rise today —

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Algoma. 1550

Mr Wildman: In all of that verbiage there was no answer to the question. The minister has said to boards that they can neither cut programs nor increase property taxes this year. Some boards have decided that the only way they can accomplish this is by using their reserve funds to make up for the cuts in provincial grants.

The Lambton board of education is using \$1.2 million from its reserve fund. The Sault Ste Marie board is considering using \$1.5 million from reserves. Kent County Roman Catholic Separate School Board is using \$1.5 million, half of its reserve fund. Other boards, the Sudbury board, the Windsor separate school board, the Fort Frances-Rainy River public board, the Carleton Board of Education, are all transferring reserve funds.

My question in relation to these guidelines from the Education Improvement Commission is: Are these boards going to find their budgets rejected and sent back by the Education Improvement Commission because they are dipping into reserve funds now?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let's be very clear about this. There are a number of boards across the province which have expressed to me the wish to have the Education Improvement Commission in place to help them in this transition, to answer those and many more questions. That's the purpose of the Education Improvement Commission. That's the reason we put that into that legislation. We've watched as other systems in Canada have moved from older systems to a new system and we want to make sure that we get this right and that the transition is smooth and doesn't affect students. That's why the EIC is in Bill 104.

There's one person in this House who has kept the Education Improvement Commission from being in place, from helping school boards and from answering those questions, and that's the member for Algoma. He should look in the mirror and ask himself that question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise in the House today with a question for the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for privatization. As members in the House know, that minister is also responsible for the auto insurance portfolio.

Many seniors and hardworking constituents in Durham East have called me and they're very pleased with the changes our minister has made to the insurance industry. For instance, on April 18 there was a news release by the

Ontario Insurance Commission indicating reductions in premiums of as much as 9%.

I also read recently in a news article that between the insurance industry and the health care providers there are discussions ongoing with medical fee schedules. Perhaps you could explain to the members in the House today, Minister.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): The member for Durham East is quite clear that this government's goal when we reviewed auto insurance was to reduce costs of auto insurance products so that we could have reduced premiums, stable premium bases for Ontario drivers.

While I was working through Bill 59, I requested that the industry and health practitioners initiate bilateral discussions to help control the costs of the accident benefits component of the auto plan. I understand that they have had those discussions, and they are continuing. They are coming to grips with a very difficult issue that was imposed upon them by the previous government, which didn't want to have that type of control, to come to grips with how costs are allocated and what services are appropriate for accident victims in Ontario. I'm hoping that they get that report to me as soon as possible and frankly provide some additional benefit to Ontario drivers through Bill 59.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, you mentioned that Bill 59 contains a number of measures aimed at controlling costs. I wonder if you could elaborate on that point and tell the members in the House today whether auto insurance rates have indeed declined since you have introduced Bill 59.

Hon Mr Sampson: I'm quite happy to say that since the introduction of Bill 59 we have had three consecutive quarters of history of that act in action. Each particular quarter has proved to produce rate reductions in the neighbourhood of 4% to 5% for each quarter for Ontario drivers. But the challenge is not over. I think our role as a government is to continue to manage that system to the benefit of Ontario drivers. The plan is there for Ontario drivers and we mean to put them back in the driver's seat.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My question is for the Minister of Health, but in his absence I will go to the minister responsible for seniors issues. Minister, you will recall the Common Sense Revolution promise that there would be no user fees for health care. You will recall your leader Mike Harris was quoted as saying, "Under this plan there will be no new user fees," and "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut."

Despite these promises, you shamelessly imposed new user fees on prescription drugs needed by sick seniors, people on social assistance, sick children, the disabled and people with mental disabilities. Last year in this House the minister said that seniors of this province don't mind paying a few dollars, being generous, to help other fellow Canadian citizens, Ontario citizens.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Yorkview. Minister.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to thank the member opposite for raising this question in the House and bringing to the attention of all members that on the entire face of this planet, the last totally free public drug plan existed here in the province of Ontario. I also want to advise the member opposite that, as of today, it is still the lowest cost, to the consumer, drug plan in all the world. As such, we have been able as a government to preserve the benefits, and in fact improve the benefits, for the drug plan in Ontario.

I sat in this Legislature for 12 years and watched two previous governments reduce benefits, where seniors would have to go into their pockets and their purses to come up with \$50, \$100, \$200, \$300 for medication which the governments of those days routinely took off the drug formulary. This government is very proud of the fact that it has increased the drug benefit plan in this province by over 300 drugs. That is good news for seniors and those who rely on that plan in this province.

Mr Sergio: The seniors of this province tell me that your government's program is only aimed at profit-making, that this government is not listening to their concerns. Many seniors are going without proper prescriptions. They have to choose between buying food, paying rent or paying for prescriptions, and you're picking the last cents out of the pockets of seniors to pay for your ill-thought-out tax cut. The seniors tell you, we have been telling you, and we are telling you, that mandatory user fees are wrong.

To add insult to injury, seniors are very dismayed at this particular time to find out that the \$100 annual fee, which started in July of last year, is only providing for barely nine months of service.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Sergio: The question is this: Is this a scam? Is this the way to balance your books, on the backs of the seniors? I'm asking you, my question is this —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: Again, I'm very pleased the member opposite has raised the question because the reason that the non-full-year implementation of the plan —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Yorkview, I appreciate the fact that it is difficult but everyone gets the same amount of time to put their questions.

Mr Sergio: On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, there's a point of privilege. I'll hear a point of privilege.

Mr Sergio: Call it whatever you want. Let me say this, with all due respect, that I watch very carefully when other members ask questions in the House and when you mention "Question," you give them time to put the question. I did not receive the same privilege. May I have the question, please?

The Speaker: Well, I can tell you, I gave you the same privilege. I know it may seem like I didn't because you were maybe caught up in the excitement, but I gave you —

Mr Sergio: Will you give me time to put the question?

The Speaker: The member for Yorkview, I've heard your point of privilege. I gave you exactly the same amount of time everyone gets. I'm sorry; maybe you could tighten the question next time. Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to respond directly to the member opposite's question with respect to the fact that the reason that three months are missing is a direct result of the federal Liberal government's inability —

Interjections.

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Hon Mr Jackson: The point is that the federal government took three and a half to four months to give the information to the province of Ontario in order to implement its drug plan adjustments. When you add that lack of cooperation and direction from the federal Liberal government, you also add the \$2.1 billion which the federal government has shorted the Ontario health plan. I'll tell you, the Ontario government is very pleased —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Windsor-Sandwich, Kingston and The Islands, Sudbury and Essex-Kent — sorry, Essex South.

Interjections.

Interjection: Windsor-Walkerville.

The Speaker: No, it's Windsor-Sandwich. Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: Might I recommend that the member opposite shorten his question and ask the federal Liberals where the \$2.1 billion is for Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members, members.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You fulfilled my guess. You blamed the feds.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines. New question, third party.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I suspect we're going to hear answers like that more often than not over the next few weeks, so I ask my Liberal colleagues not to get too sensitive.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Your question's to?

Mr Silipo: My question, in the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is to the government House leader, who I know will be very interested in this question.

We've been noting with interest reports in the media about how you've got your megacity transition team all ready to go. It looks quite frankly like the biggest collection of Conservative and government buddies ever assembled. We've got Paul Sutherland, an unsuccessful Tory candidate; John Wimbs, a long-time Tory alderman from Scarborough; Michael Gee, a well-known Tory and former Toronto councillor; pro-megacity Metro councillor Lois Griffin; and of course we've got dear old Alan Tonks, the biggest megacity-boosting Metro chair.

But what we don't have on this list is someone who reflects the 76% of the people who said no to the megacity, not one on the list we're seeing. I want to ask simply this: Where are the people who opposed the megacity on this list? Why are none of them being considered on the transition team?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): First of all, what I should say is that the member opposite is reading from press clippings. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has not made any announcement. I, today, obviously cannot make any announcement. So this is all speculation at this point in time. It may indeed prove to be true; it may prove to be untrue. But it's very difficult for me to comment on speculation that is in the media.

I know the member is referring, for example, to an article in the *Toronto Sun* where there are six people referred to. I personally know all the people involved and can only speak very highly of each and every one of them, and can only say that if at some point in the future the minister did make an announcement that involved these people, they would certainly serve the people of Metropolitan Toronto very well in my estimation.

Mr Silipo: The minister will understand that if we just go on past record we've seen these kinds of leaks out before, the day before the announcements are made; that's the pattern, Minister.

Let me ask you something else on which I think you can, if you want to, give a very clear answer and that is, when your government appointed the co-chairs of the education implementation commission on the education side on Bill 104, you at least in that process had the appointment of those individuals subject to the review process we have here under the standing committee on agencies, boards and commissions.

I want to ask you with respect to the appointments to the transition team, as well as the appointments to the financial advisory board, because those earlier appointments of course still have to be made given that they were ruled to be illegal by the court, will you at least undertake to have those appointments to the transition team and the financial advisory team be subject to review by the government agencies committee?

Hon David Johnson: I'm not in any position to give such an undertaking. I'll be happy to relay the views of the member opposite to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but then it would be up to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in terms of how he proposes to proceed with this.

In terms of the individuals involved, I know that the first individual he mentioned, the chairman of Metropolitan Toronto, is not exactly a well-known Progressive Conservative. As a matter of fact, Mr Tonks ran in the riding of York South against the previous Premier of the province. It was a very close race, as I recall, but the Premier won. As I recall, at that point Mr Tonks ran for the Liberal Party. Knowing some of the other individuals involved here, I'm pretty sure that not all the others are classified as Progressive Conservatives either.

But whether they'll be appointed, I don't know. I'll be happy to bring your suggestions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I'm sure you'll be more than happy with the people on the transition team.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Recently the member for Port Arthur in a member's statement warned that because of Bill 109, your Local

Control of Public Libraries Act, many municipalities, especially smaller municipalities, northern municipalities, were in danger of losing their local libraries.

Minister, can you tell me whether this is a legitimate concern on behalf of these municipalities, or is it another example of Liberal fearmongering?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I thank the member for Chatham-Kent for his question. I think it's particularly fitting that the very last speaker at the standing committee on Bill 109 was a representative from a small northern community. Sandra Weitzel, the head librarian for communities in and around the Wawa area — that's way north in northern Ontario — spoke to the committee, and what she said was that times have changed, fortunes have changed, ways of doing business have changed, and the proposed amendments seem to make the library system more fair in terms of funding and more accountable in terms of governance to the communities who support and use them.

If the library community in Wawa looks confidently to the future of library service, why can't the member for Port Arthur?

Mr Carroll: The member for Port Arthur also indicated that under your proposed changes, citizen participation in library boards would probably disappear. Would you comment on whether this is also a valid concern?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Please allow me to quote from the library board chairman of Chatham, Irene Carey. She said to the *London Free Press* that she's not worried about citizens losing control of their libraries. Councils rely on the general public in areas of culture, and she doesn't believe that council members would get involved in deciding who does what and who does not and what does not go on the shelves.

May I remind the member again that the city manager in Chatham, Hugh Thomas, has been the chief executive officer for the Chatham library board since 1993. Not only has the board not disappeared under this leadership, but it's actually thriving and provides excellent service for all the people in the community.

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LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Minister of Labour. On April 9 in a conversation with me you told me you were willing to establish a commission to review the Goldcorp mine strike, which is now approaching one year in duration. It's my understanding that you have now refused to acknowledge that you were actually willing to establish such a commission. I'm just wondering if you're still in favour, or do you deny raising with me the establishment of a commission to look into this strike which is now, as I say, approaching one year in length?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would simply indicate to you that there was a headline in your press release which indicated, "Miclash Receives Commitment from Labour Minister to Establish a Disputes Advisory Commission for Goldcorp Strike," and you go on to state, "I'm pleased the minister has finally

decided to intervene and use her office to bring an end to this dispute."

That information is totally inconsistent with any information I provided to you. I indicated to you that we had been closely monitoring the strike and were looking at each and every avenue that would be available to us to bring it to a conclusion, and that on eight occasions our mediation people have worked to bring it to a conclusion.

Yes, we do have the opportunity of looking at two different commissions. We can take a look —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr Miclash: Minister, I could take it from your answer so far that you are willing to go ahead with this advisory commission. I wouldn't have mentioned the advisory commission to the press if you had not mentioned it to me. I had to go and do my research to find out what a commission would do, what it would be. There's no way that I knew of such a commission. In this House on April 9, you said to me that you would have an advisory commission set up to help these folks resolve the problems. The strike is now approaching one year. When can the folks look for the advisory commission to be set up?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would simply indicate to you that we have been monitoring the situation and yes, there is an opportunity for the Ministry of Labour to use two different commissions: One is a disputes advisory commission and the other is an industrial inquiry commission. However, neither has the power to end a labour dispute, so I would indicate to you that you provided some very misleading information in your press release.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour, that is out of order.

Mr Miclash: Obviously, you were lying to me, then.

The Speaker: The member for Kenora is out of order as well.

I ask the Minister of Labour to withdraw that, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I will do so.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Member for Kenora, I would ask you to withdraw that as well.

Mr Miclash: Mr Speaker, somebody has to —

The Speaker: No, I'm not into a debate here.

Mr Miclash: You told me that.

The Speaker: Member for Kenora, I am going to warn you for the last time: Either withdraw it or I'll have to name you.

Mr Miclash: One year in length. The minister told —

The Speaker: I name the member for Kenora, Frank Miclash. The member for Kenora will withdraw from the chamber.

Mr Miclash was escorted from the chamber.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations with respect to your government's proposed permanent charitable casinos. I've got two different answers from the government. From the Premier, he has not indicated that you would give any consideration to the fact that a community objects to the imposition of a charitable casino or, if there is a bylaw in place, that you would respect the municipal bylaw. I've seen reports of

your comments in the newspapers saying, "If the community doesn't want one of these, we're not going to force it on it."

Let me tell you very clearly, Beaches-Woodbine does not want a permanent charitable casino in our neighbourhood. We have made that very clear. Tell us, how much more clearly do we have to state that to you? What do we have to do? Will you commit to me today that you will not force a charitable casino on the community of Beaches?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): It's quite unfortunate that the honourable member doesn't realize that there is quite a lot of benefit from the charity gaming clubs.

We're trying to address a problem which really was created by the Peterson government with the advent of the three-day Monte Carlos which were introduced without any type of accountability, particularly to the charities. As a former municipal councillor, many of us who have shared the municipal experience know full well that after three-day events quite often charities do not benefit by one cent out of the old roving casinos. This brings accountability into the system. It will bring accountability certainly to the charities. This is what we're trying to do.

Ms Lankin: That will be of little comfort to the community of Beaches-Woodbine. It's not that I need to realize that these are of great benefit. The people in my community do not want a casino operation in the middle of a residential neighbourhood. Don't tell me that there is benefit from this. You're talking about changing dramatically from an operation where there was a Monte Carlo that would operate for a few hours a day in a church basement or in a banquet hall to a permanent site that's there seven days a week every day of the year, 24 hours a day, with addictive video slot machines, bets that go up to \$100 a table instead of the maximum of \$10. We don't want this in our community.

Minister, you've said in ink, in the press, that if communities don't want one, you won't force it. Give me that commitment here today. Beaches does not want a casino. Promise me you won't force one on our community.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The one commitment I will give is that through our new charity gaming clubs there will be accountability. That is what this is about: It's making sure there's integrity within the system and it's making sure there is accountability to charities.

I certainly wonder what the member is going to do in terms of the Monte Carlos going on currently down in the Beaches area, which are benefiting the charities. These will now be part of the charity gaming club and will be replaced. I would think the charities within her own area would want to make sure they get funding.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that we now proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Okay, let's go to motions.

Hon David Johnson: Surprise! Mr Speaker, I know the feeling. Every once in a while —

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT

LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Mr Snobelen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, an Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm introducing the Fewer School Boards Act for third reading today in response to the public's demand for a more responsive education system, one that focuses on providing a higher quality of education to all students in this province. Ontarians want less bureaucracy in their children's education and more emphasis on high-quality standards in the classroom. They want achievements, not apologies.

The Fewer School Boards Act would reduce the number of school boards and the number of trustees overseeing education in Ontario. This legislation will result in trim and efficient school boards and trustees whose main focus is on classrooms, not on boardrooms. It will allow us to shift resources to support priorities identified by parents, taxpayers and successive governments in this province. It will allow us to address the issues identified in 24 separate reviews on finance and governance since 1950, including two royal commissions, 10 commissions and committees, and two fact-finding reports.

While the need for reform has been endlessly studied, the system has largely remained static. For too long the people of this province have watched as province after province has embarked on long-overdue reforms of their education systems. The status quo is no longer possible. Every other jurisdiction in Canada has either reformed their education system or is poised to do so. By standing

still, Ontario is falling further behind. Each day that we delay reform means our students have even further to catch up.

1620

Today I want to assure the students of Ontario that we will no longer sit on the sidelines as others move ahead. The Fewer School Boards Act is a building block to better education. By reducing administration and duplication, we can now with confidence focus resources on the individual student and the teacher in the classroom.

This government has stated clearly that it is committed to ensuring all Ontarians have access to a high-quality education, one that puts our money where our students are: in the classrooms of this province. Previous governments have tried to reshape education by applying new programs and priorities piecemeal on to an already overburdened foundation. In the end their changes were cosmetic, giving the short-term illusion of being fresh starts, but in reality not delivering the much-needed change.

The need for profound change is obvious. Last year alone Ontarians spent more than \$13 billion on elementary and secondary education, yet our students' performance on national and international tests continues to lag behind. It's no wonder parents are concerned about whether their children are learning what they need to learn to thrive in our complex society. It's no wonder taxpayers aren't convinced they're getting a good return on their investment in education.

The Fewer School Boards Act is the first step in bringing improvements to the quality and scope of the education we are able to provide for all children in Ontario. The hallmarks of Ontario's new education system will be high, consistent, province-wide standards and accountability. Our standards will be clear, measurable and comprehensive in all grades. The new revised curriculum will be the same across the province.

Our government is committed to a new curriculum for grades 1 through 9 in language, math, science and technology, and those standards will be released in the coming months. This rigorous and demanding new curriculum, which will be consistent across the province, is the first stage in building a complete curriculum that provides a solid foundation in the basics. It will focus on reading, writing, spelling, grammar, math, science, geography, technology and Canadian history. It will also renew programs in the arts, physical education and other subjects.

Education reform is an ongoing process. It's one of the most rewarding tasks of this government. We are working on changes now to support the future success of our youngest citizens. Secondary school is one of those changes. We want to give our students a competitive advantage as they prepare for a knowledge-based global economy. That's why we have just completed consultations on secondary school reform. We heard from more than 20,000 individuals and groups. This valuable input will form the basis of this government's decisions on the structure and content of the secondary school program in Ontario.

While much consultation still needs to take place and some changes will not be in place for one, two or more

years, I can now say that education reform is under way in Ontario. The Education Quality and Accountability Office has begun to conduct province-wide testing of students so that parents will know whether their child has learned what is expected. Our commitment to parents is that they will know exactly what their children are expected to know, learn and be able to do at various stages of their schooling. One way we will be able to do that is through a new, understandable report card that allows them to see clearly how their children are doing.

Just as we will open the way for greater parent participation on school councils, we are also inviting parent feedback on government initiatives. Beginning this year, we're going to publish our own report card and ask the public and parents to grade our efforts. We believe it's the best way to make the system more accountable.

We need to reform the education system to ensure our children a solid foundation upon which to build their lives, a foundation upon which Ontario's future prosperity depends.

During the transition period, we will stabilize funding to boards at existing levels so they can plan and prepare for the changes that lie ahead. Since budgets will remain stable, parents should expect that boards will maintain class size and existing programs and activities.

Beginning in September 1998 we will distribute education funding to school boards through a new fair funding model that we are currently developing. The new model will recognize the cost of educating students, including special circumstances such as students learning English as a second language, students with special needs and students in remote communities. It will also address the accommodation needs of school boards by outlining a new capital allocation process.

It will respond to the concerns of our large urban boards, which are the largest recipients of new immigrants not only to Ontario but to Canada, and of smaller boards in the north which must meet the very high costs of transportation and heating. We will be releasing a proposal for the new funding model in the coming months.

This government has made a choice. We want education dollars to go where we believe they provide the best value: to students and teachers in the classrooms across this province. At the same time, we are focusing on ensuring that we will build high province-wide standards of education where excellence is the norm for all.

We will streamline administrative overhead by reducing the number of major school boards and replacing them with new district school boards, effective January 1, 1998. Where possible, the district boards will fall on municipal boundaries. We'll be retaining the small isolate and hospital boards as school authorities.

The Fewer School Boards Act is the first step towards cutting the number of major school boards in Ontario. In addition, we'll replace varying school board pay for trustees with an honorarium of no more than \$5,000 per year. These measures would help ensure the Fewer School Boards Act would also mean fewer school board officials earning \$100,000 per year or more. We are also reducing the number of trustees.

Finally, to make sure these reforms take place in an organized and careful way, we are proposing to establish

the Education Improvement Commission to work with local communities, including trustees, teachers, parents and other stakeholders, to guide the process of change. I'm delighted that Dave Cooke and Ann Vanstone have agreed to assume the role of co-chairs of this proposed commission. Dave and Ann have extensive experience in Ontario's education system and I know they will provide continuity and leadership throughout this transition period.

As members are aware, the government proposed a number of changes to the act to help ensure a smooth transition to the new school boards. We listened to Ontario parents, educators and taxpayers during the process of hearings and other consultations. As a result, we believe we have a better piece of legislation that ensures these long-awaited changes will happen through a well-managed process.

Let me outline these amendments again briefly.

We agreed to introduce greater flexibility into the act by making it easier for school boards to report to the Education Improvement Commission. We agreed that financial controls on school boards for 1997 would not be retroactive prior to royal assent of the bill. We also agreed to help provide effective mechanisms to resolve local issues relating to the transition to district school boards.

I believe these changes will smooth the transition process to a new system of education governance. I'd like to convey my personal thanks to the parents, taxpayers and educators who shared their views during these consultations.

In closing, I want to thank the members of the standing committee who travelled across the province to listen to the public. Their work has allowed us to improve this legislation. In addition, I want to thank the school board officials, teachers, students and parents who have taken the time to provide valuable comment on this issue. I can assure you that your continued support will be vital.

Responsibility lies with all of us to act together to bring about these changes. In doing that, we are returning public trust to Ontario's education system.

We introduced Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, as a key component in our comprehensive strategy to enhance classroom learning and student achievement. There is no question that the world our children will graduate into will be quite different from the one we see around us today. The reforms that we are making will ensure that Ontario's students will not be left behind.

We owe that to our students, who are as capable as students anywhere in the world and have the right to a challenging education. We owe it to parents, who have the right to know that their children's education is second to none. We also owe it to our classroom teachers, who through consistent province-wide standards can be assured that the students coming into their classes have the skills they need to succeed. And we owe it to taxpayers, who need to know that their education dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively. We can do that by bringing greater balance and common sense to our school governance system.

I urge your support of this bill to ensure that our education system keeps its priority on classrooms, not

boardrooms. That is how we'll encourage Ontario students to move to the head of the class.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): As I rise to participate in the debate, I wonder if there is consent of the House for me to split the time with the member for St Catharines and the member for Windsor-Walkerville, should that appear appropriate.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for that? Agreed.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I have to say at the outset that I am not pleased to be participating in this debate today, but I think there are some things that have to be said about the bill and about the process that brings us, sadly, to this point of third and final reading.

I feel very strongly that this bill should not be here today. I don't believe this bill should be here before this Legislature at all, but it should certainly not be here to be rammed through in defiance of all the concerns that have been expressed by trustees indeed, by teachers most certainly, by board employees, but most particularly concerns that have been expressed by students and by parents, people who are genuinely concerned about education and the future of education in this province.

The minister has spoken about the concerns that parents have. We've heard those concerns repeatedly as people have come to understand what this bill and this government's agenda are all about. Those people who are genuinely concerned about the future of education are worried about this bill. They believe this bill will lead almost inevitably to the loss of local governance in education and they are fearful of this government's real agenda: the gutting of public education when the government takes control over educational funding.

Over and over again, presenters to the committee in its public hearings have said that this bill on the amalgamation of school boards is only one piece of a puzzle. They want to know what the other pieces of the puzzle look like, what the whole puzzle is going to look like when this government's agenda is fully, irrevocably revealed in its impact on publicly funded education. They want to know what comes next.

They want to know, for example, what's going to happen to the hundreds of contracts that are going to have to be renegotiated after amalgamation takes place, how many more teachers and board employees are going to be out of work and how much larger our class sizes are going to be because of what is referred to as the "harmonization" of all of these contracts. They want to know what funding will actually be in place when this government takes over. They want to know what the government refers to as "equal funding" is actually going to mean to students under the new funding formula.

The minister again today, moments ago, has said there will be this new funding formula. People are saying, "Show us now." If you know how this is going to help students, if you know how this is going to put money into the classroom, if you know how this is going to improve the education system, tell us now and show us the money

that is going to provide the resources that will make that happen. But that's just one of the pieces of the puzzle the minister wants to talk about but doesn't want to show us.

Even the Franco-Ontarians, who understandably welcome, as we do — there is one small part of this bill which we can take some pleasure in, and that is the extension of increased French-language governance in education. They have said to us over and over again, «Le financement, c'est le nerf de la guerre.» "Show us the money. What resources will we have as we take over this governance to meet the needs of our students?" That is the universal question. These are all legitimate questions, and there are no answers from this minister or this government.

People who came to our committee expressed amazement that any government would rush through legislation that mandates such sweeping changes when there are no answers to these questions. They fear that the ministry doesn't actually know how all of this is going to work, that the details will all have to be worked out later, and that gives these concerned individuals no reassurance whatsoever. In fact it's just the opposite, because when people see the government's determination to rush this through, even when there are no answers to the most fundamental questions about how it's going to work or what it's going to cost, when the plans for implementation, for working out the details are all going to be left to this non-elected, non-democratic, non-accountable Education Improvement Commission, those people understandably ask, "What is the hurry?"

Over and over again, people have come to this committee, and it was especially true for parent councils, and said: "Slow down. Take the time to get it right." There are members in the government caucus who were present at those hearings. They'll remember that refrain over and over again: "What's your hurry? Slow down. Take the time to get it right."

There was one representative of a ratepayers' group who was called by the Conservatives to present to the committee, I think expecting a somewhat sympathetic presentation on the bill. This was somebody who does corporate mergers on a regular basis, he's a man who has experience in bringing together different organizations, and he said so clearly, "You cannot make this kind of amalgamation work unless you take the time to get it right, unless you make it absolutely clear that you know where you're going and you take the time to bring people along with you."

This government has not taken the time to get it right and they certainly haven't taken any interest in bringing people along with them, the very people who are going to be needed if this is actually to improve education for students in our system.

The only answer that was given to the question of "Why are you in such a hurry?" was — and this is a direct quotation from the then parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, who somewhat sadly is no longer the parliamentary assistant, because I think he did try to really listen to the presentations that were made and genuinely expressed some concern for the questions that were being raised. It was Mr Skarica, who is no

longer parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): He is the one who simply won't be bullied by the Premier.

Mrs McLeod: Indeed. But the parliamentary assistant on this particular occasion was giving the minister's answer. "Why are you in such a hurry?" The answer that came back, duly reported by the parliamentary assistant to the minister, was that the government wants the savings as quickly as possible. It doesn't matter if you don't take the time to get it right, it doesn't matter if you don't bother to consult, it doesn't matter if you don't work with people to bring them along with you so that this can be done well. The government needs the savings and it needs them in a hurry.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): To pay for that tax cut.

Mrs McLeod: That's right, to pay for the tax cut. The problem is that that doesn't hold up as an answer; it doesn't hold up as a responsible answer to the people who are concerned; it doesn't hold up as an answer on the basis of the facts, because the government itself is only projecting savings that would represent less than 1% of the entire education budget. That is hardly enough to provide the dollars that are needed to help fund Mike Harris's tax cut.

The second reason the answer that we need the savings in a hurry doesn't hold up is because every study that has been done on the amalgamation of school boards questions whether there are any savings to be found. The Minister of Education can bring in as many wheelbarrows of studies as he would like to do, he can say as often as he wishes that the time for study is past; if he would only read one of those studies, he would find that it said it is entirely likely that amalgamation will cost more, not less, and that the savings, the less than 1% of the educational budget, the minister hopes to find through this massive change in school board governance are simply not going to be there.

Even the Premier, in earlier times and wearing a different hat, had said that amalgamations always cost more. In this case the Premier's sort of instinctive belief about that is backed up by every study that has been done on school board amalgamation. They cost more, and certainly they cost more at the beginning, with all of the costs of harmonization, with all of the severance costs of the people who are going to lose their jobs in this hunt for the so-called savings, the very costs that those school boards are going to have to pay for in the first six months when the minister says he has given them something he called "stable funding," so as they have to pay for all those startup costs that the minister won't even admit are there, they're going to have to take those costs right out of the classrooms and the support for children in those classrooms.

So why the rush? What is the real reason this government can't take the time to get it right? Why won't the minister even talk about the costs of all this? I think it's because the government wants to rush this bill through before too many people actually realize how bad it is. If the government had had its preferences, I well recall, there would have been no public hearings at all on a bill that it considered to be minor.

1640

"After all," said the government House leader directly to me when I was expressing my amazement that on a bill with this mammoth impact there would be no public hearings, "there's no money in the bill." Exactly. That's one of the things that worries people. "If this bill is going to work," they say, "show us the money."

But the government doesn't want people to know too much. They just don't want people to see too many pieces of the puzzle. They want this done, and the minister wants it irreversible, before the consequences are fully understood. Once this piece of the puzzle, that may seem to be not a huge piece of the puzzle, is in place, once school boards are rendered completely ineffective with this reorganization, it will be easier to force the other pieces of the puzzle through. In fact, some of the pieces, like dealing with teachers' contracts, will actually become necessary in order to deal with the chaos this Minister of Education is about to launch.

I think the confusion is only increased by the ease with which this minister makes statements that are not backed by facts. He says he will pay the costs of transition, but the ministry says clearly in writing it will not. The minister himself brought in an amendment to his bill that says boards will pay the cost of transitions. This minister says he's going to fund junior kindergarten, but he's already cut the funding in half for junior kindergarten. This minister says he will mandate class sizes, but there is no guarantee that he'll back up that regulation with any dollars that will be needed. It will be like early retirement for teachers that the Minister of Education and the Premier talked about, how they're going to revitalize the teaching force and give job opportunities to new young teaching graduates with a 50-50 funding proposal. Except when the teachers got to the table, there was no money on the table. This minister is great at offering reassurances, but there is never any money behind it, because this minister is looking to take money out of the system.

This is not about education reform; it is certainly not about the curriculum reform that for some unknown reason the minister felt he had to focus on today as he presents his bill on school board amalgamation. There's nothing about curriculum reform in this bill; there's nothing about curriculum. There's nothing about teaching kids in this bill.

This bill is about two things: One thing is the taking of dollars out of education and the other thing is about John Snobelen's own need to make change, any change. It is about John Snobelen's belief, indeed, that to bring about change you first have to create a crisis. It doesn't matter that he doesn't know where he's going. The vision of where he's going is going to come later when he figures out what he's going to do next and when he sees what he has actually done.

John Snobelen doesn't believe in reform. He has said very clearly, and I quote him directly, "Improvement is the enemy of change." What John Snobelen believes in is radical change, a leap into the unknown. John Snobelen himself has very clearly said that the way to force an organization off the cliff into that great unknown is to drive your changes through against all resistance or to bankrupt the organization so that it is forced to jump.

Today I believe John Snobelen is preparing to do both. He is going to force through his changes despite all the concerns that have been raised, and he is without doubt ready to bankrupt the system even more than he has already.

How convenient it is that bankrupting the system, which is Mr Snobelen's way to bring about change, will also let Mr Snobelen deliver far more than the projected \$150 million in savings to the Harris tax cut. The minister has already boasted that he can deliver \$1.2 billion. The Premier has said that he needs at least \$1 billion from education. When John Snobelen takes control of educational funding, he will at last have the power to deliver the dollars his Premier needs. That's the other reason the government wants to rush this through: It really does need the money to pay for the tax cut. The problem is that no one actually knows where that \$1 billion is going to come from.

Their other problem is that none of it is working out too well. The little problem of what to offload on to the municipalities so that the government could get its hands on the education budget — because the two things go together: They want control of educational funding so they can make cuts, but they can't afford to just take it over and pay for it, so they've got to offload costs on to the municipalities. This is the big downloading argument. It's proving somewhat difficult politically.

I really don't think the government has given very much thought to the human and the social consequences of offloading welfare, long-term care, social housing, public health and child care on to municipalities. But they are clearly disturbed that the municipalities actually figured out what was happening before it was a done deal, probably before the government had figured it out. I don't think the municipalities have had time to think a lot about the human, social and community consequences of all of this, but they do know that they don't like to be conned, they do know that they don't like an extra \$1 billion dropped on top of their property tax base, and they are clearly not taking this quietly.

The government's downloading plan is in absolute chaos. Their proposal to take over educational financing is dependent on the downloading on to municipalities, and this bill amalgamating school boards cannot work if the government doesn't take over educational financing. The fact that the downloading plan is in chaos is a reason why this bill should be withdrawn today, because the government cannot make this work unless it solves the other parts of this puzzle.

As the education critic and as somebody who has devoted a lot of years to the concerns of public education, the question for me is, where does all of this leave public education? As these changes are forced through despite all of the concerns and all the unanswered questions, as the minister prepares to bankrupt the system and create so much chaos that any organized resistance may prove to be impossible, what happens to kids in all of this? I wonder whether anybody over there cares what happens to kids in all of this.

I am not convinced, and I say this with genuine regret because over some 30 years in politics I've worked with a lot of ministers of education, that this minister cares

about much more than delivering \$1 billion to his buddy the Premier. Anyway, this minister would assure us that any change is better than no change at all, just don't resist change, don't be part of the status quo; don't worry about where we're going, don't worry about who gets hurt in the process, just get things going. So Bill 104 is about to be bullied through today.

We've seen this government bully things through before. We saw it with Bill 26, the original bully bill. One of the most notorious things Bill 26 gave us, as I suggested yesterday, was the non-elected, non-accountable, arm's-length, all-powerful Health Services Restructuring Commission, which is well on its way to destroying health care in this province. Now we are about to have a similar arm's-length, non-elected, non-accountable education commission, whose decisions will only be challengeable in court if they are constitutional issues, because even this government has to be a bit careful about constitutional challenges until it can figure out some creative way to get around it.

The commission on education, like the commission on health care, will take this legislation and put the flesh on it, they'll make it real, they'll put all the details in place, according, perhaps, to their own views on how the world should work or according to the views of a government that prefers to work in the backrooms and not in the open, where the public might actually challenge its agenda. We have seen how political the Health Services Restructuring Commission is proving to be. I think the Education Improvement Commission will be just as political, and not arm's length from this minister at all.

We had a minimum number of hearings, because we insisted on them on this bill, when at least 1,000 people who wanted to be heard were shut out. We had four brief hours reviewing the concerns that were presented. We had four brief hours presenting amendments to try to make the bill better. At the end of those four hours the time that was allocated to even pretend to consider amendments ran out and they just simply said, "Consider them all to be read." There was no further debate.

Now we have third reading on a bill that's virtually unchanged in response to all the concerns that were heard, except where the government had to fix a glaring mistake like the fact that they forgot that as of January 1, 1998, according to this bill, there would be no employers in our school systems, none of the current employees would have a legal employer, and nobody would actually own the assets and liabilities of the existing boards, so they had to fix that small drafting mistake, and they gave some token acknowledgement to a couple of areas where the outrage was particularly great. I trust there will be time to touch on those areas before I finish.

1650

This bill is no less wrong than it was in the first place and it is no less frightening in its likely consequences. I believe that this bill, along with its companion piece of government control over educational financing, threatens publicly funded education, and that unless we can continue to fight its implementation even after it passes, the damage that is done to public education could be irreversible.

There is no doubt at all that taking over funding and essentially taking over educational governance prepares the way for funding cuts. If you doubt that's true, I would refer you to the minister's own report, the one I'd like to think he had read, even if he hasn't read any of the other studies on school board amalgamation, his own Ernst and Young report on the savings through amalgamation, the \$150 million that he keeps talking about.

There's another part to that report, because his own consultants expressed the concern in writing in that report that costs indeed could go up under this amalgamation, and the minister's response, also in writing, was essentially to say: "Don't worry. We're going to take over educational finance and then we can control the costs. We will take over and harmonize all those costs of harmonization, the harmonization of teachers' salaries, the harmonization of services. We'll take that over and we'll control the costs." In other words — let me translate — what that means is that the ministry will take over and they will cut. They will cut services or they will cut salaries, and in all likelihood they will do both.

I ask you just to think about the kinds of questions that parents asked when they came to our committee. I raised one in question period the other day. It was a parent council representative who pointed out that in the amalgamation taking place in her district, an amalgamation of four boards, one of the boards that was being forced into this amalgamation had decided that when the government cut its funds, they would do everything they could to hold on to junior kindergarten. So they kept their junior kindergarten program in that board, but they had to cut instrumental music and they had to cut French immersion.

Another of the boards that's being forced into that same amalgamation made the decision that French immersion was important to the children in that school district, but they didn't have enough resources to both manage French immersion and keep junior kindergarten, so they very sadly had to let their junior kindergarten program go. This parent came to our committee and she said in genuine concern, "When we're in this new amalgamated board, which program is the board going to keep?" In the name of everyone being equal, how are you going to determine whether everybody should have equal access to junior kindergarten or whether they should have equal access to French immersion?

Is the ministry going to fund both programs? Unlikely, because they certainly don't want the costs to go up, and they've already cut the funding. That's why the boards are facing these kinds of choices now. Or are both programs going to be lost? If you can't solve the problem by providing equality of access to junior kindergarten for all the students, equality of access to French immersion for all the students, maybe the only thing you can do is provide none of it to any of them. Which program is going to win and which students are going to lose? I think in any of the choices, all the students are going to be losers, as I believe that all the students in this province have been losers since this government began its program of cuts.

Yet this government is so anxious to get this bill passed that it has been trying to sell it, and I've been amazed watching this. They've been trying to sell it to

the public, and in fact to their own backbenchers, because I hear the spin coming back to us from the government members on the committee.

Mr Bradley: The talking points they put out for the backbenchers.

Mrs McLeod: That's right. It's the talking points that they put out, as the member for St Catharines says, that try to sell this as a good-news bill. The government actually does not just put it out as talking points, I say to the member for St Catharines — he'll want me to mention this — because the government has actually been prepared to spend a lot of money to get out the message that this is a good-news bill. It's all part of the strategy to keep people calm by telling them what they want to believe, by telling them what the government wants people to believe, while the government covers up what it is actually doing. They spent a lot of money on those television ads that the member for St Catharines keeps raising.

Mr Bradley: Three quarters of a million dollars of taxpayers' money.

Mrs McLeod: Indeed, they spend three quarters of a million dollars of taxpayers' money in order that Mike Harris can come on television during the intermission of the hockey game — there are a lot of intermissions in hockey games these days — and tell us: "Things are fine. We're making things better. Relax and enjoy the game. Why should you worry?"

What I want to do with some of the remaining time is to look at Bill 104 and see why the government's so-called good-news bill is not good news at all. The government has said: "This bill is good news because it's about fewer school trustees." My goodness, don't we all think that having fewer politicians is a good idea? The government has used that with fewer provincial politicians. Two days ago they used it for fewer politicians in Metropolitan Toronto. Why would this not be good news for school boards too?

I suggest to you that this is not about fewer trustees. You could reduce the number of trustees without bringing in this kind of mammoth change, with all the consequences and all the costs that this is going to mean. This bill is about the eventual elimination of local governance and local decision-making. It makes boards unworkable. If the minister wanted fewer school boards and to still have workable school boards, he would have looked at something more like the task force proposals. I didn't agree with them all, but they made a lot more sense than these huge mega-boards that this minister is proposing — deliberately large, deliberately unworkable, either because of their sheer geographic size in my part of the province, where some of those boards are larger than European countries, or in Metropolitan Toronto, where there will be 300,000 students, more than the entire province of New Brunswick.

We already have fewer boards per students than virtually every other province. The government keeps wanting to compare us to Alberta. In Alberta they have almost the same number of boards as we will have after this amalgamation, and we have four times as many students. Why did the minister choose such incredibly unworkable, unwieldy board boundaries? Why did he fly

in the face of every other study that's been done? Because he wants them to be unworkable. He doesn't want trustees to be accessible to the electorate, and under these new boards, trustees will be virtually inaccessible to the electorate.

Then, of course, when the government takes control of educational funding, the trustee role really becomes untenable. They will have no financial flexibility. They will have no real accountability. All the decisions are going to be made in Queen's Park. As someone said — in fact, I think it was the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association — we will have centralized decision-making and decentralized blame. That will be all that's left to school trustees in this province, to be the whipping-post, the complaints bureau, so that the government and this minister can refuse to take any responsibility even though they are making all the decisions.

Eventually, because trustees are not accessible and they can no longer be accountable because they don't have control over the dollars, people will say, "Why do we elect trustees?" We originally elected trustees because they were to raise property taxes, because property taxes were to ensure that communities paid for the education of their children. If we're no longer having taxes at the property level, people are going to say, "Why have trustees?" That's why I believe this leads inevitably to the loss of school boards. This is about the dissolution of school boards, and it will lead to the loss of local decision-making.

I don't think there is much doubt that this is where the government wanted to go in the first place. I think boards are a convenient buffer for them so they don't have to accept responsibility, but they still offer the argument that parent councils can take the place of school boards anyway. Parent councils are important, there is no doubt about that, but as important as they are, 5,000 parent councils cannot individually lobby Queen's Park on behalf of the students in that school. They cannot do it, and as a result, if we lose our school boards, we will lose the effective advocacy that school trustees have provided for public education.

There is the other small fact that the minister chooses to overlook: that parent councils — we had representation from literally hundreds of parent councils to our committee — unanimously said they do not want to replace school boards. They are not prepared to do the work of trustees as volunteers. They do not want the added responsibility. They want to work to make their own schools better and they want parents in every school to have the same opportunity. They do not want to get into a school-by-school competition and they particularly — and they said this over and over again — do not want to be left with a 1-800-WHO-CARES number to call at Queen's Park when they are concerned about their children's education. So this is not just about fewer school trustees; this is about the loss of local governance and decision-making in education.

1700

The second reason the government offered to try and convince us all that this is a good-news bill is the companion piece: that this is about taking education off the property tax, and surely we'd agree that's a good

idea. Well, I happen to be one of the people who spent a long time as a school trustee arguing that the province should pay more of the cost of education, that there should be less of the cost of education borne by the property taxpayer.

The theory of taking over educational funding 100% — and I point out that the government's actually not paying 100%, because it is still going to tax business and commercial properties — for the first time, Queen's Park will tax business and commercial properties — but it's going to control 100% of the funding. In theory, maybe taking the \$5.4 billion that we now pay in residential taxes for education off the property tax base might be a good idea, but the fact is, we've all seen the price of that tradeoff, and no one thinks the downloading of all the other social services on to municipalities is a good idea. Nobody but this government thought that idea made any sense at all.

I suggest that although I happen to be a believer that the province should pick up a greater proportion of education costs so that it can ensure greater equality of educational opportunity, it should not be trying to control 100% of the cost; in the first place, because it is not affordable, and we have seen the proof of that, and in the second place, because I truly believe we need some local tax base to ensure continued local governance.

David Crombie, even in his first report, before he wrote a second one and desperately said to the government, "Don't take over educational financing if it means you're going to dump all these other costs on to municipalities," even before he got to that point of desperation, when he was still looking at the province taking more of the share of education, said, "Keep a portion on the local tax base so that we can have local governance."

This government, any government, I say to the member for Huron, who I know is genuinely concerned about the quality of educational opportunity and funding, could meet the need for equitable funding for every student through the grant system without taking control of all funding and all decisions. It could do that if the government were truly committed to equitable funding that meets the needs of students.

But if the government were truly committed, as the minister says, to meeting the needs of every student, it would have to do something very real and very immediate: It would have to stop the funding cuts. We have just seen another \$250 million cut from school boards' budgets. How can a minister talk about meeting the needs of every student in an equitable way while he cuts another \$250 million from the support to those students? If he were serious about that and if this government were serious about equitable funding, they would have to stop the funding cuts and they would have to stop putting more and more of the cost of education on to the property tax base, which is exactly what has been happening for the last few years. I don't think the government's been able to convince anybody at the municipal level that the plan to take education costs off the residential property tax is a good idea given the tradeoff.

We come to the third reason why the government says, "This is a good-news bill because we are going to free dollars for the classroom." This is the argument that is

calculated to appeal to those who are genuinely concerned about education. I have heard both David Cooke and Ann Vanstone, who have accepted to become consultants as they are in waiting to become the co-chairs of the educational commission that sadly is likely to become law within the hour, say that this is why they are participating, because it is going to free money, dollars for the classroom. If that were true we would all rejoice in it. It sounds great. The problem is there's nothing real to that.

I've already said the maximum projections of savings the minister can find is \$150 million, less than 1% of the budget for education. I've already said that every study, including his own study, suggests that the costs under amalgamation could go up. But if I come back and just look at the \$150 million and the minister's own statements about what can be found in savings, and I look at where those dollars are coming from — I hope those who genuinely believe the minister when he says this is about dollars for education have seen this and I hope they're shocked by this — of that \$150 million the minister says he's going to take, \$9.9 million of that comes directly out of classroom supplies and equipment. We've seen the school books that are being held together with elastics because they're falling apart. We've heard students talk about not being able to work on science projects because there's not enough lab equipment for them to be able to share it. Yet they're prepared to make their savings with \$9.9 million directly out of supplies and equipment.

They're prepared to take \$1.3 million out of educational support, the very people who provide support so children with learning challenges can be integrated into classrooms. Did they have to go there for \$1.3 million of their amalgamation savings?

They're taking some \$19 million out of student busing. Now they are going to take some more money out of the administration of busing. They think they can do that. This isn't administration, this is busing kids to school. It's one of those non-classroom costs that the minister somehow thinks you can do away with.

Even though I am shocked that this \$150 million is actually going to be found by taking direct cuts out of the classroom, I still have to ask why any government would take on this kind of radical change for \$150 million. I am absolutely convinced that it is because this government wants a lot more than \$150 million. You wouldn't go through this for \$150 million.

We heard the Premier last October say he needs \$1 billion from education to pay for his tax cut. We have heard John Snobelen boast that he can take \$1.2 billion, not for the classroom but for the tax cut. He has given no guarantees, no guarantees at all, that one penny of the savings he expects to find is going to go back into the classroom.

If this minister and this government are really looking for \$1 billion more out of education, again I ask the question, what does it do to education? What does it do to public education? I know with absolute certainty — because I've seen the effect of \$400 million in cuts last year; we're starting to see the effect of \$250 million more in cuts this year — that these kinds of cuts will devastate public education.

The minister wants you to believe that's not the case. The minister wants you to believe there is tremendous waste and overspending. Again, what an easy sell that should be. Just talk about how unaccountable and irresponsible school trustees have been, how they've overspent. They take distortions. They take single examples and distort them to try and paint a picture of irresponsible spending on the part of school boards.

I'm not going to get into the minister's standard one of the Peel Board of Education and their golf course, which of course if he was being fully open about it he would acknowledge is education property held in trust and the board is trying to get some revenues to put into the classroom through the same kind of partnership that this minister talks about. I'm not going to get into that. I'm not going to get into the Taj Mahal of that same board because they've got a waterfall. That's the other one the government members have been told to keep referring to if you want to show that school boards are irresponsible. I'm not going to get into the fact that when the chairman of the Peel board spoke to us, she described how that was there because it served environmental and cost-effective purposes. After all, I can't take time to deflate every single distorted example this minister has brought into this place in order to create the impression that there is waste and overspending in education.

The minister, of course, uses as a standard: "Well, we're over the national average. We're spending more than the national average on education." He distorts that figure. We are spending only slightly over the national average, not \$1 billion over. I have to ask, why would Ontario be under the average, given our goals for education and given the unique needs of the Ontario student population? What kind of goal is that for a Minister of Education to have?

The minister also says, "We spend \$6 billion outside the classroom, you know." Somehow we're supposed to think that represents incredible waste. It's dollars not being spent on students. I suppose it is true that we spend \$6 billion outside the classroom if you don't think that schools need supervision or you don't think they need janitorial care or secretarial services or libraries or heat or light or you don't need to bus kids to school, because those are all part of the \$6 billion. That, in turn, is related to this minister's idea that we're spending 46% of our resources on non-classroom expenditures. So he wants us to take that idea of 46% being spent in non-classroom and believe that's being spent in administration. In fact, the cost of administration is less than 5% of school board budgets in Ontario.

1710

Again I can come to only one conclusion on the basis of fact, and that is all of this cynical manipulation of the facts to create a sense that cuts can be made without hurting the classroom. When you add that to the government's track record of cuts to junior kindergarten — and they did make the cuts; they cut the funding by 50% — when you add that to the track record of cuts to adult education — they cut the funding by 50% and they have devastated adult education in every area that was dependent on government grants to provide the educational programs for adults who need that second chance — when you look at the cynical manipulation of the facts on

the part of this minister, when you look at this minister's absolute insistence on ignoring the effect of his past cuts on class sizes and special education programs — and he did it again today; he has forced cuts to special education, he has forced the shutdown of junior kindergarten classes, he has forced larger class sizes by the cuts that he's made — when you look at this record, it makes me very pessimistic about this government's intentions. I can only come to the conclusion that we are bound for much larger cuts to come.

There's one more reason, reason number four, which the government offers as to why this should be seen as a good-news bill: because it is about equal funding. "This is about equity," the minister says. The minister says there will be no second-class students in Ontario. How could anybody, any of us who have committed a large part of our lives to public education, not say "amen" to that? I'm one of the ones who's not prepared to say "amen" to that when this minister says it because I am very much afraid that the agenda of this government, once it is realized, will mean that every student in this province will be a second-class student. I believe that this government will equalize funding, all right, but it will equalize it at the lowest common denominator. As one presenter said, "Equality at the lowest rung of the ladder is not progress."

I've looked very carefully and I don't believe that there is more money in the system right now than is needed to meet the needs of students. I happen to think that there are needs of students that still need to be addressed. I hear the government talk about the increase in school board spending over the last 10 years and I say yes, because past governments believed in the importance of elementary schools having small grades so that we could meet the needs of students in grades 1 and 2, and we put more into that; and because past governments, including past Conservative governments, believed that we needed to meet the special needs of students, and they put money into that; and because governments believed that adults who had to drop out of school for a whole host of reasons needed a second chance, and we put money into that. Did that increase the spending on education over the last 10 years? Yes, it did.

As somebody who is committed to public education, when I look at each of those areas, I would not apologize for that spending. It may even be that if we were prepared to truly acknowledge the needs that are there, we would understand that truly fair and equitable funding that meets the needs of every student, and I quote the minister, would mean that more money is needed in the system. I know again with certainty that quality education cannot be provided with less money and that this government's cuts are already making it impossible to meet the needs of students. When the minister stands up and says, "We are going to meet the needs of every student; let's get on with it," I simply don't believe him because I have seen no evidence that attests to anything except the opposite of that.

I would say that even if you could believe him, exactly how is the matter of equity going to be determined? That's another of the great unanswered questions. Whether you are concerned about the needs of students

in what people might describe as assessment-rich Toronto or, forgive me, assessment-rich Ottawa; or whether you're concerned about equity and defining equity for the assessment-poor areas, and I know again the member for Huron has spoken of that at committee, and I respect and understand that; whether you're talking about equity for students in the separate school system, and that has been a long-standing need that has not yet been addressed; whether you're talking about equity in the new French-language boards that are going to be established, how do you determine what equity is? Under the new model, the ministry is going to determine all educational funding, and nobody knows on what basis. Again, we've asked and we've asked, "Show us the funding formula," and we can't get it.

I have asked and I ask again, how can the ministry ever develop funding formulas? The minister talks about revising his funding formulas; he talks about simplifying the funding formulas. How can you develop a funding formula that is going to address the complexity of different needs from region to region or from school to school when the minister controls all this? How is he going to decide what dollars are needed to meet the needs of the students in that particular school? I've used the example of a small school in Atikokan, St Patricks school. It's one of the isolate board schools that is totally controlled by the minister now. He pays the piper; he decides how much money; he decides how many teachers. They believe that they are short half a teacher and the grade 6 kids only have half a teacher. It has taken us months to get the Minister of Education to even acknowledge that he is responsible for that one school. I ask again, if the minister can't get it right for one small school in northwestern Ontario, how will he get it right for 5,000 schools, let alone two million students? How will he decide what is equitable to meet the needs of every student in this province?

One of the other studies done by the minister, another study by Ernst and Young: The minister went out and said, "Try and help me understand why school boards are spending so much money," and the study came back and they said, "You know, the size of a board isn't a factor that accounts for spending, so amalgamating boards is not going to solve that problem." It wasn't part of the problem anyway. What the study basically said was, again the minister's own consultants, "We don't know what accounts for the difference in spending between boards, and the ministry should go back to the drawing-board" — that's what the consultants said — "and get some better understanding of why some boards spend more than others and what factors are beyond a board's control." They specifically said, "Look at, for example, the number of special education students."

I suggest that until that happens, until the minister and the ministry and the government are prepared to go back to the drawing-board and understand the needs that are there and acknowledge the needs that are there and put the funding to meet those needs, there is no chance of truly fair funding that meets the needs of every student in Ontario.

There is so much more that we need to comment on in this bill because it has such sweeping consequences.

There is so much more. There are so many amendments, so many concerns that are raised that I want to be able to touch on. Harmonization: How are boards going to decide which programs they keep, which programs they lose? I've touched on that. The chaos of collective bargaining: We understand that there's going to be new collective bargaining legislation coming down in a matter of weeks, so maybe we'll get some sense of the direction the government is going in that regard. The minister again last week talked about the Paroian report, the report done by his friend Mr Paroian. We've already seen that report dismissed as completely irresponsible and he is still talking about that as a basis, presumably, for the legislation he's about to introduce.

I need to talk about outsourcing because this is a concern that was raised over and over again, not just by the employees who were obviously concerned about their role in the schools and how it would be affected, but by parent group after parent group who spoke to us about their concerns that this idea that we could outsource non-instructional services like the janitorial care and the secretarial services and the library and the guidance, that we could outsource that to private sector, how parents said: "This is dangerous for our students. We're worried about the safety of our students if we have dial-a-cleaner or if we have to call in a secretary from the temporary secretarial pool, people who don't know our kids, who don't know our school."

Over and over again the parents said to us, "Every member of our school staff is an integral part of our school community. We value them. We need them. We don't need strangers here; we need people who know our kids and care about our kids and work as part of the school community."

1720

The member for St Catharines would want me to draw attention to the particularly effective presentation that was made by the educational support staff workers of the Lincoln County Board of Education, the Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, the Niagara South Board of Education and the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

These are the educational assistants who work with students with special needs. They are the secretaries and clerks, the youth care workers and the child care workers, the technicians and the custodians, and maintenance and groundskeepers. They say: "We are an integral part of the school environment. We believe that learning extends beyond the four walls of the classroom."

Unlike Mr Snobelen, they believe they are part of the school and the students' learning. They say: "We offer services beyond our paid responsibilities. We coach sports teams and assist with extracurricular activities and attend after-school functions and respond to last-minute emergencies. As public employees, we are directly accountable to our students, our parents, our community. Many of us have responsibilities for confidentiality as a top requirement and we understand this legal and moral obligation." Their view was echoed by every parent who presented to us.

They also say outsourcing doesn't save money. That's another thing the government wants to ignore, because

there were two presentations, one from the Durham board and one from the Essex-Kent separate school board, that have actually tried outsourcing. They came back and they said, "We cancelled it because we found it cost us more money than it did to have our own personnel providing those services."

The government made one minor change in outsourcing. They were going to direct the commission to direct the boards to implement outsourcing and now they're saying, "Where it is appropriate." It is a minor change; it is an appeasement in response to the concerns that were presented, but all those parents worried about their children and about the loss of services their children need — it should not be there; outsourcing should not be in this bill at all, because outsourcing should never be seen to be appropriate in a school community.

The other part of this bill that I must touch on — if there should be time, what I would really like to get a chance to do is go through some of the very specific concerns and specific recommendations that were made by all the people who presented to our committee. But I cannot fail to mention the concern that was expressed over the powers given to the Education Improvement Commission. I cannot fail to mention the concerns that were raised about the lack of representation.

We don't know, apart from the two consultants who will become co-chairs, presumably, after today, who's on this commission. We don't know how the representatives will be chosen. The Franco-Ontarian members of our caucus have particularly asked me to say that people are concerned about whether there will be any provision for Franco-Ontarian representation on this commission, as the government moves to establish new French-language governance. That was a concern we heard broadly: Who is going to be on this all-powerful commission that will make these decisions?

I am also concerned, with reduced funding, with lower quality of public education, that there is a potential for charter schools here on a scale never before imagined. I come back again to what for me is one of the most frightening consequences of the loss of local governance and of funding cuts: the potential development, I think the inevitable development, of a two-tiered education system, one for those who can provide something better and another for those who can't.

If this happens, I say once again that we lose the most important value of public education: the provision of the best quality of education to every student, with regard to their special needs but without regard to their ability to pay. This concern that we are heading towards a two-tiered system and an Americanization of education was frequently expressed during our hearings and again most particularly by parents.

The lack of time to hear all these concerns, to explore them fully, the lack of meaningful response to these concerns by the government makes this so-called consultation process that I participated in for two weeks not much more than a sham. So I only hope that the about-to-be-made-legal commission, whose chairs have already begun meeting in back rooms to start the implementation, is going to listen and will advise the government on some changes the government will accept.

If one thing makes these hearings worthwhile besides the effort to maintain some semblance of democratic process, which is rapidly disappearing in this province, it is the widespread involvement of parents and the beginning involvement of students. These people have offered a passionate endorsement of their belief in public education and an equally passionate denial that the system is broken.

They are not going to let John Snobelen or Mike Harris destroy public education in this province, not at the expense of their children or anybody else's children. You are already starting to hear their voices, I say to members on the opposite side of this House, and they are not going to go away. I can only hope they are not going to be too easily discouraged, because I know they are going to find it very hard to deal with the cynicism that drives this government's agenda and this minister's approach to change.

It is sometimes hard to believe that all this is happening because Mike Harris made a campaign promise based on numbers that never added up and because John Snobelen was only too ready to do his part to help the Premier deliver, and because John Snobelen is a man who believes it is okay to do whatever he says he wants to do. The fact that things don't actually add up doesn't worry John Snobelen any more than it worried Mike Harris. Mike Harris figured he would make it work out later. John Snobelen doesn't let reality get in the way of what he wants to do. He just redefines them to make them fit; he languages, if I can use his term, a new reality.

If John Snobelen says there's \$6 billion spent outside the classroom so we should be able to save \$1 billion or more, then don't worry about the fact that these dollars are spent on heat and light and busing kids to school, don't let reality get in the way of your pronouncements. If John Snobelen says the system is broken, then it must be. Forget about the Bertelsmann Prize being awarded to the Durham Board of Education for being at the top of the list in an international comparison of school systems. If John Snobelen says, "We will meet the needs of every student," then you are supposed to believe it's going to happen. Don't ask what's going to happen to class sizes or school supplies or junior kindergarten or adult education or special education as he goes looking for his \$1 billion, and don't pay any attention to what happened when he took his \$400 million out last year.

John Snobelen, I suggest to you, is a perfect lieutenant for a revolution that has nothing to do with common sense, because he is ready to embark on change for the sake of change. He feels no need for the vision thing people keep asking about, because his concern is for the transformation itself and the \$1 billion he can find bringing it about. John Snobelen will transform public education into chaos, and then, if he is not stopped, into nothingness. He will not let truth or reality or values stand in his way, because they are, after all, only the impediments of the past, and they must be overcome. Change is what matters, and any one who resists it is to be despised.

In case you're thinking, Mr Speaker, that I am making unfair attributions, I refer you to John Snobelen's own "create a crisis" speech, in which he made his management credo explicit, quite scarily so. In that speech he

said that change was all about turning caterpillars into butterflies, and if you can't convince or prod the caterpillars to change, and I quote, "Occasionally, just plain running over them works."

The trustees are clearly the caterpillars to be run over with Bill 104. Teachers and other educational workers will be next, and the views and the fears of parents are being run over too. Ultimately, the real caterpillars are the students. In John Snobelen's virtual reality world, every student is to become a butterfly. In the real world of Ontario in 1997, no student is going to have a chance.

For that reason, I conclude with regret that this bill is likely to pass, but with the moving of a reasoned amendment which I have tabled:

That Bill 104, an act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards — I'm going to forgo the rest of the title because I can't bear to read it, since it is not reflective of reality — be returned to the standing committee on social development until such time as the following matters have been resolved:

The boundaries and trustee representation of the proposed boards are set out in regulatory form.

The changes to the financing of education are finalized and the shift of costs on to the property tax is finally determined.

The funding formula for education is set out.

The costs of amalgamating are fully analysed and understood.

The redefined roles of trustees and parent councils are clarified, including legislative changes that will be made in this regard.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): A reasoned amendment is proposed by Mrs McLeod:

"That Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability" —

Mrs McLeod: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker: Dispense? No.

— "effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, be not now read a third time but be returned to the standing committee on social development until such time as the following matters have been resolved:

"The boundaries and trustee representation of the proposed Boards are set out in regulatory form.

"The changes to the financing of education are finalized and the shift of costs on to the property tax is finally determined.

"The funding formula for education is set out.

"The costs of amalgamating are fully analysed and understood.

"The redefined roles of trustees and parent councils are clarified, including legislative changes that will be made in this regard."

Further debate?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to be able to stand up today and have an opportunity to discuss Bill 104. I applaud my colleague from Fort William for her outstanding efforts throughout public hearings and throughout the debate, not only on this bill but on the issues that confront education, educators, students and parents throughout this province.

Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards etc: I'd like to take a few minutes to address accountability, to address effectiveness and to address quality.

I have had the opportunity to read this bill, to travel the province with the committee that had such limited time to do hearings, to review the government's entire agenda with respect to education, and I'd like to tell the people who are watching this debate that there are 12 sections of the bill, far-reaching sections each one of them, and each one of them addresses concerns and each one of them proposes solutions, most of which we find unpalatable.

In a close review of this bill and a review of the transcripts of the hearings, let's talk about what the bill has not addressed. In two weeks of public hearings and in no section, not one of the 12 sections of this bill, do we address the question of standards in our schools. We have not talked about whether we are providing our young people with the quality and type of education we ought to be. We have not had a debate on that. Instead we have spent our time and energy talking merely about boundaries and establishing a commission that will effectively remove the ability of parents and communities to influence education.

We have not permitted our teachers to share with us their concerns about the Education Act and about the direction that education ought to be going in. We have not talked about or debated whether our students have the right skills in English and in mathematics to prepare them for the 21st century. What we have talked about is cutting. What we have talked about is a narrow agenda whose only aim has nothing to do with quality or accountability but is to save money at the expense of a good education system.

When other jurisdictions that admittedly have governments not unlike this government are moving to increase spending, are moving to improve classroom education, we've talked about things like boundaries between communities. Why haven't we discussed standards? Because this government has no vision of the future for education. It has the vision of a tax cut. It has the vision that is narrow and doesn't understand or comprehend the importance of quality education to economic growth and development.

Why haven't we talked about ensuring that our teachers have the tools they need and our students have the teachers they need in every classroom in this province? Because the government has no idea. This government has a narrow agenda. They would rather fight with teachers than talk to teachers. They don't want to debate issues because on every count they have been wrong.

We see in the media today cooked surveys that come out about teachers and people's attitudes towards teachers. Well, the good news in those surveys was that

the only person whose credibility is lower than teachers and school boards is the Minister of Education.

Yes, my friends, there will be debates around educational issues. We will not agree all the time with teachers, but we think it's more important to involve them in the debate and let them share with us their knowledge and expertise. Throughout these hearings that were conducted with respect to Bill 104, we heard time and time again from our educators: We heard them express their concerns, we heard them speak in eloquent and passionate ways about the needs of young people in this province and the needs of our education system. Instead of declaring war on those teachers, we ought to declare war on illiteracy and put those issues at the front of our agenda and not push teachers out of the debate as though they're some kind of enemy.

The government has not told us yet what its entire plan is. Will they take away the right to bargain collectively from teachers? We don't know. Will they go to regional bargaining? We don't know. But the point, and I think it's one that people in the opposition and people in general understand, is that if you want meaningful and effective change in education, you have to involve educators, you have to listen to the people who educate our children, who provide education not only to children but indeed to adults and to others.

Throughout our limited hearings, we didn't talk about whether our students could read well and independently, we didn't review the statistics with respect to literacy, we didn't have a discussion about what we can do better and how we can improve the education we provide those students. We haven't challenged ourselves or our educators to ensure that Ontario stays near the top in terms of quality of education in this great province. That is a debate that would be worthy of attention, not a debate that deals exclusively with a few school boards and some misguided notions about reinvesting money into the system.

This government has no vision of the classroom. This government doesn't understand that in modern education the classroom extends beyond teachers and chalkboards. It includes guidance counsellors, it includes libraries. The schools today are much different than they were when many of the members in this House attended them. The members of the government ought to take the opportunity to go through schools and to see those schools and see the challenges they're faced with, the challenges of the inner-city school versus the rural school, the challenge of an educator who is faced with a variety of children in his or her classroom with differing needs and differing challenges for the teacher. We haven't talked about that.

We haven't talked about improving opportunity for our teachers to improve themselves. We haven't talked about what the future should look like in terms of teachers. Oh, we created a College of Teachers in previous legislation that in effect creates the only profession that isn't self-governing, where you don't have practising members of that profession overseeing that profession, at least not a majority.

1740

I say to the government, this bill doesn't talk about teachers, it doesn't talk about whether or not we have the best teachers available in our schools and it certainly

doesn't talk about our children's ability to read, write, do math and learn about computer literacy. This government has not addressed those questions. This government is more interested in cutting, cutting, cutting. I would suggest, though a balanced budget is important, what's more important is that we have the finest schools in the world, that our kids can compete with every education jurisdiction in the world so that our economy can continue to grow and provide jobs and opportunity.

We haven't talked about early childhood education. We've talked about whether there should be a school board here or there, but we haven't talked about the importance of early childhood education, the importance of junior kindergarten, for one, among other things. We haven't even talked about the role of parents in early education. Study after study after study has concluded unequivocally that early education is not only important in terms of each individual student's ability to achieve in the future but it's important in terms of society's ability to address questions that are of greater import vis-à-vis social equality.

We haven't talked about those issues in Bill 104, and we haven't talked about education. When the government suggests that Bill 104 is about accountability, effectiveness and quality, it has nothing whatsoever to do with that.

We haven't talked about discipline or safety within our inner-city schools. We haven't talked about providing a safe classroom and a disciplined classroom. We haven't talked about curriculum. We haven't talked about what we should be teaching our students and where we can make improvements and where we can do better; no, we haven't.

In the little time we've been given to talk about these issues, we have talked about things that are meaningless, I would submit, to parents and students but important to this government because it has set a budget policy. They promised they could balance the budget, cut income taxes 30%, not touch classroom education, not touch safe communities and policing and not touch health care. They have not been able to do it.

We know the figures in health care. We have seen hospitals recommended for closure in Thunder Bay, in Ottawa, in Toronto, in the rural areas. We have a situation in this province today where more than \$400 million has been cut from the education budget, and yet at the same time this government sees as its priority giving away \$5 billion in revenue at a time when we should be investing in our schools, investing in our health care system and investing in safe communities.

That's not to say that balancing a budget isn't important. This party and our party could balance a budget but would see priorities much differently in terms of where we cut, when we cut and how we cut.

The government hasn't talked about our school buildings. Well, I shouldn't say that. That's not entirely fair. They removed the freeze they put on capital spending this year. They removed the freeze. They haven't talked about the tens of thousands of Ontario students who are being educated in portable classrooms. They haven't talked about the school buildings in this province that are literally crumbling. They haven't talked about the high-

growth areas of this province where there aren't enough new schools being built, where parents are either busing their children to other districts or where there are too many portable classrooms. This government hasn't addressed those questions, save and except to say that they will not address those questions in a meaningful way.

To conclude, this party, our party, challenges the government to take a meaningful approach to education, to take an approach that goes beyond simple arithmetic and looks at future needs, to take an approach that's inclusionary and visionary, an approach that will ensure that our children, and indeed our adults who need adult retraining, have access to a first-rate education from junior kindergarten through to graduating from university, an education that's accessible and affordable and the best in the world.

We say, and this party says, we can do that. The government has abdicated its responsibility in education. It has taken a narrow and self-serving financial perspective, and that is going to hurt the children of this province and hurt this province's ability to compete in the global economy of the 21st century. On behalf of our party, I say withdraw this bill and let's have a debate about education, and let's move forward posthaste with meaningful and true improvements in quality, in effectiveness and accountability of our education system.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In the few minutes that are left as a result of the time allocation motion, I'd like to put forward, on behalf of our party, our objections to the passage of this bill, Bill 104. I want to thank my friend the member for St Catharines for giving me the time. I appreciate it.

A few moments ago I was speaking to some members of the press who asked me why we attempted today to prevent the discussion on Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, when we knew that we probably could only have prevented it from going forward today and it would probably have been dealt with tomorrow if we had been successful. My response to them was that we wanted to demonstrate our complete and utter rejection of this bill. In the few minutes I have left, I want to explain why we think this bill is completely unacceptable.

I have participated in this debate, as have most members of the assembly, obviously as a member of this assembly representing the people from my constituency. I also participate in this debate as a taxpayer. I participate in this debate as a parent, as a grandparent now, and as a former educator. I participate in this debate as a spouse of a teacher.

I think, though, my concern centres on my role as a parent and a grandparent. My main objection to Bill 104 is that it does absolutely nothing to improve the education for kids in Ontario. As a matter of fact, it is going to make it possible for this government to dramatically harm the education of students if the government is so determined to take the money out, because it is going to concentrate control of the education system in the Ministry of Education and Training, control over funding and over expenditures as well as curriculum. I think that is going to have very drastic effects on the education that my little girl and my granddaughter will be able to

receive in Ontario, unlike my little girl's three older brothers, who are now finished school.

I know for one thing that by the time my little girl and certainly by the time my granddaughter get to be old enough to attend junior kindergarten, there probably will not be a junior kindergarten program in central Algoma. I know that. All three of my sons went to junior kindergarten and benefited from that, but this year the Central Algoma Board of Education had to change the junior kindergarten program from an every day half-day program to an every-other-day full-day program. If they experience further cuts after this amalgamation, they will cut the program completely.

1750

The problem with this bill is that the local residents, the parents, the ratepayers will blame the local board, this new amalgamated board, for making this decision. They won't understand that the board, being given an option about junior kindergarten, will have no choice when it sees the new funding formula. That's why I object to passing Bill 104 now and why we were determined to delay it as long as possible, because we need to see the funding formula. We have to know what this government is going to do about funding education in this province before we pass this legislation.

The minister himself has said this is just the first step in a series. We understand that. But the most important step is, how much is this government going to fund for students in their classrooms across Ontario? I can tell that with the \$400 million that was cut last year. We've seen the cuts across Ontario. Now, what this bill is about, essentially, is to put the minister in a position so he can get more money out of the system, particularly from Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa, boards that have not, up to now, been dependent on grants from the Ministry of Education and Training. From now on they will be. That's why it's important for us to see the funding formula before we move in this regard.

The other reason I'm opposed to Bill 104 is that I know what's going to happen as a result of this. First, the EIC, even with the draconian powers it has, is not going to be able to resolve and amalgamate all the boards, get the new administrations in place, merge all the collective agreements, merge the seniority lists, deal with the early retirements and get all that done by January 1, 1998. It's impossible. They won't get it done. We're going to have chaos in the system in January. You're going to end up with teachers who have been working under different collective agreements who are now in the same board and they'll continue under their old collective agreements. So some teachers doing the same job will be paid less than their colleagues even though they have the same employer after this bill comes into effect.

I also know what administrators and bureaucrats are going to be doing for the next two or three years: They're going to be concentrating on how to get these amalgamations in place, how to work it all out. They're not going to be dealing with how to improve education for kids; they're going to be talking about administrative problems. They're going to be negotiating with the federations about how we deal with these new collective agreements, unless the EIC is going to impose agreements on education workers and teachers.

They're going to be dealing with issues like outsourcing. I know the government withdrew the word "promote" from the bill, but it left in the word "facilitate." Well, "facilitate" means you're going to do it. So we're going to have outsourcing. Those are the kinds of things they're going to be working at.

They're going to be talking about: "How do we lay off these people? How do we contract with someone else to do this?" That will have serious ramifications for the safety of the kids, for the safety of my daughter when she eventually does get to school, if we don't have the same kind of dedicated staff, custodial and secretarial staff as well as teachers, in the schools. I fear for my daughter, I fear for my grandchild, and that's why I'm opposed to this.

We need to know what the funding formula is before. That's the most important step and that's what we need to know. We need to know what commitment the government has with regard to curriculum, what kind of effects the proposals for secondary school reform are going to have. These are things we have to know.

We are opposed to Bill 104. We're opposed to it because in some cases it doesn't make sense, it doesn't even do what Mr Sweeney proposed. Mr Sweeney talked about 88 boards; this has 66 boards. Mr Sweeney talked about four boards in Metropolitan Toronto, not one. Sweeney did not talk about the alphabet soup board in eastern Ontario. He did not suggest that Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and Prescott and Russell all be one board; he said there should be two boards.

In the same way, in the London area, he didn't say London, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin should be all one board; he said there should be two boards. He didn't propose in northwestern Ontario that we have one board west of Thunder Bay that's the size of France. He didn't propose in northeastern Ontario that we have a board that runs all the way from Hornepayne and Hearst along Highway 7 through Timmins right into Nipissing almost to North Bay through Timiskaming.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Four hundred miles.

Mr Wildman: Four hundred miles long. When I raised this in an earlier debate, the member for Durham —

Mr Bradley: East?

Mr Wildman: Durham East, yes. I pointed out that in that particular board they would probably have the meetings in Timmins; I suspect that's where they'll have the meetings. If you're in Hornepayne, you're going to have to drive four or five hours to get to a meeting. He said, "Well, why don't they have the meetings in Hornepayne?" I suppose they could, but then all the people in Timmins would have to drive four or five hours to get to Hornepayne.

The suggestion was that perhaps we should have teleconferencing. The committee learned that in many parts of northern Ontario and other parts of rural southern Ontario they don't have the infrastructure for teleconferencing. You need five lines, apparently, for teleconferencing; in many cases, they only have two. I know that Bell Canada has said, "If you give us the money, we can get you the infrastructure." I suppose the money for that kind of infrastructure for board meetings by teleconfer-

encing will be taken out of classroom education and that Bell will get lots of new technology at the taxpayers' expense.

In some parts of the north, of course, not only do they not have enough lines, they don't even have digital equipment; they still have rotary phones.

Mr Len Wood: Party lines.

Mr Wildman: And party lines. Imagine what it's going to be like if your neighbour happens to be a trustee and he's on your line and he's got a teleconference.

The committee understood after hearing the representations of the trustees, the parents and the students from northern Ontario areas in Thunder Bay and Sudbury that this doesn't make sense, and the standing committee voted unanimously to request that the new boundaries proposed for these new mega-boards be reviewed. First they voted for a motion that dealt with the northern Ontario boards and said the boundaries should be reviewed. Then, after all of our hearings, which ended in Midhurst in Simcoe, they voted unanimously to have all of the boundaries of all of the proposed new boards reviewed, the Metro board with 310,000 students and the rural southern Ontario boards as well as the northern Ontario boards.

I didn't think that even this government could ignore a unanimous vote of the standing committee, could ignore the wishes of their own members who were on the committee. I hope they won't. But if they simply leave it to the Education Improvement Commission to deal with, I'm worried, because the minister has not indicated that he expects there will be major changes. He said there could be some adjustments, but he has not indicated there could be major changes such as breaking up the Leeds, Grenville, Lanark, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, Prescott and Russell alphabet soup board.

We are diametrically opposed to this legislation. We are diametrically opposed to the government's agenda for education. We do not accept the view that we can redefine a classroom and not count libraries, not count vice-principals and principals, not count support workers, not count psychologists and so on —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Algoma, thank you.

The Minister of Education has moved third reading of Bill 104. Shall the bill be now read a third time?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1801 to 1806.

The Speaker: All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Parker, John L.
Bassett, Isabel	Harnick, Charles	Pettit, Trevor
Beaubien, Marcel	Harris, Michael D.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Carroll, Jack	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Leadston, Gary L.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Eves, Ernie L.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Villeneuve, Noble
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ford, Douglas B.	McLean, Allan K.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fox, Gary	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Young, Terence H.
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	
Grimmett, Bill	Palladini, Al	

The Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Morin, Gilles E.
Bradley, James J.	Grandmaître, Bernard	North, Peter
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Pouliot, Gilles
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are 33.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1810.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 24 April 1997

Jeudi 24 avril 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 avril 1997

*The House met at 1002.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I move private member's notice of motion number 44:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should keep its election promises to the people of northern Ontario found in its election document entitled, *A Voice for the North*; by giving northerners a greater say on policies which affect them, found on page 3 of its election document; by preserving and enhancing health care services for the people of northern Ontario, and guaranteeing 1995 levels of health care spending, found on page 6 of its election document; by guaranteeing funding for classroom education at 1995 levels, found on page 7 of its election document and by working closely with northern municipalities to forge a new and better working relationship. As part of that new relationship, the government committed to end the downloading of services to the municipal level and that no new mandates will be enacted unless appropriate funding is allocated, found on page 13 of its election document.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member has 10 minutes.

Mr Miclash: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the Legislature this morning to raise a good number of issues of concern, issues of concern that I faced throughout northern Ontario as I travelled the region. As I indicated in the resolution, what we in northern Ontario are looking for is for Mr Harris to follow through on a good number of his commitments on the plan he had for northern Ontario, which he entitled *A Voice for the North*. Actually, what we found is that, as in the Premier's Common Sense Revolution, this *Voice for the North* was nothing but a good number of empty promises. People in northern Ontario are not being fooled by the Tories' slick made-in-America election-type propaganda.

I often think back to when members from the Conservative caucus, along with Mr Gilchrist, travelled to northern Ontario, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, the member for Simcoe East. They came up on what they called a focus tour. It was really kind of an interesting tour. When they landed in Red Lake they had a couple of very brief meetings. They got the media upset with them. The headline reads here in the *Red Lake District News* that "Mike Harris Focus Tour Shuns Press and Public in Red Lake."

The article goes on to say: "Fact-finding trips generally involve meetings with the public and press representatives, however, Pat Sayeau, president of the Kenora riding PC Party excluded the fourth estate from meeting with the touring MPPs for reasons known only to himself."

Then it went on to say, "Is the PC Party so bereft of members in Red Lake that they could not hold a public meeting or does PC stand for private consultations?"

As I indicated, these members arrived in Red Lake, had a couple of meetings, then hopped on an airplane and went to a camp up north of Red Lake to go fishing. I tell you that the folks in Red Lake were quite upset by that.

What we're seeing here today is they came back with a number of recommendations, they called it *A Voice for the North*, and they're not following through on any of these particular recommendations and suggestions that they have made. In essence, they're ignoring the concerns of northerners, and they seem to have just started doing that the day they got elected.

We know that northern Ontario's a region that is created and sustained by the strength and will of the people who live there. Generations of northerners have actually dreamed of building our distinct region into one that's economically strong, socially just, proud of its diversity and characterized by integrity and compassion. Unfortunately, in the past two years this government has not allowed northerners to move ahead in that direction.

As we know, our health care system in the north is presently in upheaval because of the Harris government's cuts to our hospital system. These cuts are hurting real people throughout northern Ontario. We must remember that during the election *A Voice for the North* said very clearly that a Harris government would preserve and enhance health care services for northern Ontario residents. We're certainly not finding that. We're finding an erosion in services. We're finding fewer services, fewer staff to meet the basic needs of patients in the health care system.

All you have to do is take a look at many of the headlines in the papers from across northern Ontario. This one: "Cuts Will Have Serious Impact on Patient Care"; Ontario Hospital Association president David MacKinnon goes on to say, "The situation now is one where many hospitals will be forced to cut back on services in an ad hoc manner while other health providers are not yet in place to handle the increased patient demand." Another one: "Extra Funding Not a Gift."

We had the Minister of Northern Development come into the region to announce extra funding after the hospital had been cut. The minister goes throughout northern Ontario saying that he's reinvesting. We had the assistant executive director of the Red Lake district

hospital saying, "This is not a gift; it will be a rebate in the reduction." The Minister of Health first of all cuts the budget, then the Minister of Northern Development comes along and pretends he's giving a gift, when it was really a reduction in the what they were getting cut by the Minister of Health.

Bob Muir, who is the executive director of the Lake of the Woods District Hospital, goes on to say that the cut would be anywhere from \$100,000 to \$1 million locally, a great amount of uncertainty. "If our cut is huge, it isn't possible to provide all the services," he says. He goes on to outline a number of services that would be taken out.

We heard this government talk about classroom funding to be kept at 1995 levels. All you have to do is go into any school in northern Ontario, ask any teacher, ask anybody on the front line as to the effect this government, over the past two years, has had on classroom education and you'll find that there are changes that they cannot handle. We're finding that through teacher burn-out; we're finding that the services just aren't there.

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Yes, the committee did travel to Thunder Bay and they heard the presentations on Bill 104. The former parliamentary assistant, who apparently is now a fired parliamentary assistant, did say, and he said it a number of times, that the boundaries in terms of school boards were not carved in stone. What happens to him? He comes back to Toronto and now we find out that he's fired. This is a man who came back and told the Minister of Education that the boundary from Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border was just not totally possible and it just didn't make sense.

We often hear that a lot of policies that affect the north are created in the Premier's office here in southern Ontario, and as we've moved these two years we've found that out more and more. Again, I go back to the recent firing of the parliamentary assistant for Northern Development. Here was a person who travelled the north, who heard the concerns of the north. He brings them back to the Premier, tries to tell the Premier about these concerns and what does the Premier do? Fires him. It just shows us that this government is mainly operated out of the Premier's office.

In terms of not dumping on municipalities —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. There are members talking too loudly, not in their seats, and it's disturbing. I'd appreciate your attention, your order, please.

Mr Miclash: Mr Speaker, they obviously don't care about the north. We can see that. They fired the parliamentary assistant, who was the person we really relied on to get the message through to Mr Harris. They fired him, and obviously my Conservative friends don't care about the issues I'm raising here today.

Again, we take a look at what Mr Harris said: "A Mike Harris government will work closely with northern municipalities to forge a new and better working relationship." Mr Speaker, I challenge you to go into northern Ontario and find one mayor or reeve, find one councillor who will actually tell you that Mike Harris has worked closely for a working relationship here.

All we have to do is take a look at the dumping of the roads on to the municipalities. I raised it with the Minister of Transportation the other day. I said: "Minister, they're not accepting them. What are you going to do?" His answer to me was: "They've got 'em. I don't care whether they're going to accept it or not, they've got 'em. They're responsible for these roads now." That's just another area where this government has decided what's best for northern Ontario and that's going to be it.

That brings me to the infrastructure inaction by this government. I consider that to be very shameful. Every province in Canada has signed on with the federal government for the infrastructure program. What has Ontario said? "No." They don't want it. What do the people in northern Ontario say? "It was one of the best programs we've ever had." If you speak to any municipal leader, they're saying: "What's going on? This is a program that we were able to do a good number of things with." Kenora, Keewatin, Jaffray Melick were all looking forward to moving ahead with sewer and water projects, with road projects, projects that are very much needed in northern Ontario. What has this government said? No, they're not willing to move ahead with that with the provincial government.

In terms of the new relationship, all we've found is this government downloading on municipal governments. I keep telling the taxpayers that eventually they will pay. Mike Harris so often said, "There's only one taxpayer." We're going to find out that taxpayer is certainly going to be paying for what this government is doing in terms of downloading.

In wrapping up, I would just like to say that we don't disagree that change needs to be made, but I think what we really want is a government that will govern by consensus, a government that will allow the parliamentary assistant to go and gather information, bring it back to the government, which will listen to it, act on it and not fire the parliamentary assistant. We're not looking for a government that's run by gimmick. We're looking for a government in northern Ontario that's representing the province that is going to listen to the people of northern Ontario and develop a consensus for action and that will act on that consensus.

I was privileged to present these points of view and I look forward to the others as well.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to participate in this debate because I'm very concerned about what the Conservative government has done in northern Ontario in the months since it came to government in June 1995. Prior to that election, the Conservative Party, being led by a member from northern Ontario, indicated that they were going to provide a new voice for northern Ontario in the provincial government if they were elected. We found that indeed the member for Nipissing has provided a new voice for North Bay in the government and that indeed he has seen the movement of education officials to North Bay from Sudbury; he has seen the concentration of the OPP communications network in North Bay from all over northeastern Ontario; he has seen the increase in certain correctional positions in North Bay. So

I guess the member for Nipissing would argue that he has done a good job for North Bay. I'm not sure.

It's interesting, though, that while the Premier is actively shutting down offices across northern Ontario — MNR offices, MTO offices — actively shutting them down, he complains when it appears that the federal government might be considering shutting down the Norad operation in North Bay and saying that this is unfair. I just don't understand. What is the difference between shutting down MNR across northern Ontario and shutting down the Norad operations in North Bay? It sounds like the same thing to me.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): It's in North Bay. That's why.

Mr Wildman: We've seen a number of offices, and MNR is a good example — I hear the member for Timiskaming commenting. What has happened with the offices in Temagami? How many MNR offices have been shut down there completely? And everybody has been moved to North Bay. I guess it's just a coincidence that the Premier comes from North Bay. I'm sure that's the case.

But I want to deal specifically with the resolution that was presented by my friend from Kenora: "...by preserving and enhancing health care services for the people of northern Ontario." In my riding, in central Algoma, we have two rural hospitals: the Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing and the Thessalon Hospital. They are part of the Sault area hospitals' operating plan, which was approved by the Minister of Health for 1996-97.

What they have done in these two hospitals is close all of the inpatient beds. They closed them and they said they will maintain 24-hour emergency service, but they only have one nurse per shift on duty. So if there's a real emergency — an automobile accident with a number of people experiencing trauma — it will be impossible for that one nurse to service all of the patients. Some of them will have to be transported to Sault Ste Marie.

Thessalon is an hour's drive from Sault Ste Marie. In the wintertime it's very difficult. In Thessalon we have a number of sawmills. There could be accidents there, industrial accidents. In both cases a number of senior citizens have retired to those areas mainly because they knew there was a hospital immediately available to them if they had a heart attack or whatever and there was an emergency and they could get to them in time.

This government, with its approval of the operating plan for the Sault area hospitals, has effectively closed down the hospitals in this area. Now the minister got up and said, because of his concerns about what's happening in the Bruce Peninsula, I think, there was going to be a review of access to hospital services for rural and northern single-hospital communities. I welcome that.

But in response to that, I wrote the minister and said: "Is this going to affect what's happening in Thessalon and Richards Landing? Will you put on hold the closure of the inpatient beds in Thessalon and Richards Landing and will you ensure real emergency service on a 24-hour basis?" He wrote back and said, "Well, that plan has already been approved," as if to say because it has been approved his review doesn't take into account these two hospitals.

This is an indication of the lack of commitment of this government to northern Ontario communities and to health care in northern Ontario. We've seen the debate that is ongoing about classroom education, how this government has redefined classroom education not to include all kinds of things that are important in terms of students' achievement.

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Again, in central Algoma, I would point out, the board has had to cut the junior kindergarten program from every day half-day during the week to every other day full-day to try and save on transportation costs. Next year, if they face further cuts with this amalgamation under Bill 104 that was passed yesterday, the amalgamation with a board in Sault Ste Marie that doesn't now have junior kindergarten, they probably will eliminate the program. It'll be gone. It has been existence in central Algoma for over 20 years. Central Algoma was one of the first boards in Ontario, certainly one of the first rural boards, to establish such a program.

That's again an indication of the lack of commitment on the part of this government to keeping its promises to guarantee funding for classroom education. Junior kindergarten is threatened and it's just one of many programs, music, phys ed, arts programs, that are threatened in small northern Ontario school systems.

Downloading: I'll just close by saying this. I was recently at a municipal leaders' meeting with officials from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There was a planner there from the ministry in Toronto. He was pointing out to the municipal leaders that from now on they will make decisions on approvals for severances and new subdivisions and so on, and they all welcomed that, until he pointed out to them that up to now all of these proposals have been circulated among the ministries for written comment and then the ministries have advised whether this should be approved on the basis of things like land use planning issues — floodplains, agricultural land preservation, these kinds of things.

This official pointed out that from now on there will be a lot less of this kind of scrutiny because he said, and I'm quoting him, "The Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't have enough staff left to be able to do the job." He didn't single out any other ministry. He said, "The Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't have enough staff to do the job." So I said, "What happens now if because of that an approval is made and then someone finds out they are on a floodplain?" in Goulais River, for instance, in that area, which is prone to flooding much like the Red River Valley is, unfortunately, right now. I said: "What happens if someone builds a house and then a couple of years later they get flooded? Who's liable?" He said, "The municipality is liable, because they're the ones making the decision."

Again, there is downloading of liability and costs to the municipalities, a cutting of the Ministry of Natural Resources. We could talk about the Ministry of Transportation too and the downloading of roads to the municipal sector. This government has cut more jobs in northern Ontario than I have ever experienced in the whole time I have served in this assembly. Not only is it not meeting

its commitments to ensure services in the north, health, education and municipal services, it is cutting those services, cutting funding to the extent that we have had increased unemployment and tremendous lack of morale in northern Ontario.

The people of northern Ontario have given up on this government. I recently read an editorial from the *Kapuskasing Northern Times* which said, "If this is what it's like to have a northerner as Premier, give us a southern Ontario person as Premier again."

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): As the newly appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and as someone who was born and raised in Sault Ste Marie, it gives me pleasure to speak on this particular resolution and to support, certainly in spirit, this resolution that the member for Kenora has presented, because it's an opportunity to list the accomplishments that our government has achieved since taking office. I want to thank the member for allowing us to remind the people of northern Ontario that we remain committed to the policies that they helped develop in *A Voice for the North*.

In Mr Miclash's resolution, he speaks about several items which our party addressed in our election document *A Voice for the North*. This was the document that he referred to, and since I'm new to the portfolio, I researched this issue to see what the opposition had promised the north during the last election. Astonishingly, there was nothing. I didn't see anything in the NDP or the Liberal platforms that specifically went to issues in the north. We did. The fact that our caucus travelled to northern Ontario — we promised that we could implement the elements of the Common Sense policies outlined in *A Voice for the North* and we are now delivering on those promises.

The first part of the resolution deals with giving northerners a greater say in policy-making, as stated on page 3 of *A Voice for the North*. Again, the creation of the document itself proves that we're listening to the concerns of northerners and the fact that the opposition parties had no such commitment.

My colleagues from Simcoe East and Grey-Owen Sound, when they were in opposition, launched the northern focus tour to begin these consultations directly with the people of the north. My colleague from Simcoe East will elaborate on some of those shortly.

I point out that on my first day on the job as a PA to the minister I travelled to Timmins. In fact, on Tuesday of this week, at the mines and minerals symposium, I met with Mayor Power of Timmins on some of the transportation issues and made an announcement on the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. The opposition neatly forgets the fact that we were the ones who restored the heritage funds that the opposition cut.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): How much have you spent so far?

Mr Spina: As a matter of fact, those funds are now in the process of being disposed. I authorized a \$160,000 cheque on Tuesday for a project that's being planned for Timmins, as a matter of fact. As the beginning, I'm already scheduled to travel —

Mr Martin: Show us the money.

Mr Spina: Check the press and look at the photograph of the cheque that we presented.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I would remind the member speaking to address his comments through the Speaker. I would appreciate it. I would remind those others that speaking goes in rotation. Right now it's not your rotation.

Mr Spina: By the way, Timmins was also the site chosen for the northern Ontario caucus meeting of all MPs and MPPs from northern Ontario. It was a productive session and one that, I add, was boycotted by the opposition members of this Legislature. Furthermore, for all the support that we understand they have for the north, I see five members in the House here right now for this particular debate.

One of the things that we want to talk about to ensure the unique needs of the north are addressed: A reformed Ministry of Northern Development and Mines now serves an important role in reviewing and recommending the changes to policies of the other provincial ministries before policies are approved. Further, the northern development office network of 29 field offices, created by the PC government back in 1970, has been kept intact in order to ensure that northerners have access to the provincial government.

In closing, I would like to go over the promises that we kept in *A Voice for the North* which the member for Kenora seems to forget. Page 22: Promote tourism through improved infrastructure. Done through the highways budget and the heritage fund. Page 22: Help northern communities develop regional tourism attractions. Done: cut a \$160,000 cheque two days ago. Page 26 says to improve the northern highway system through more capital funding. Done.

In the mining sector we promised to do the following: Page 19: Regulations on mine reclamation will be changed in order to encourage new investment. Done. Page 20: Government-mandated costs and regulations affecting mining will be reduced. Done. Page 20: Ontario Hydro rates frozen. Done. Page 20: Mining taxes and fees will be frozen. Once again, done.

As you can see, our government, led by Minister Hodgson, is committed to fulfilling the promises made in *A Voice for the North*. Moreover, we remain committed to implementing the Common Sense policies as suggested by the people of northern Ontario, not by our government, so that their voices are brought to Queen's Park. I look forward with great enthusiasm to be repatriated and serve the members of the north as a member of the PC caucus and as a member of this government. I look forward to the opportunity to support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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Mr Ramsay: I'm very pleased to be able to rise in my place today to speak in support of this motion that has been brought forward by my colleague the member for Kenora. I am very pleased that he has used his private member's time to again speak up for northern Ontario and give others of his colleagues around the House here the opportunity to remind people about how important northern Ontario is to the life and economy of this province.

Coming on the remarks of what I've just heard from the government member, I can't think of any other government in the history of this province that has done more to ruin the life of northern Ontarians than this Harris government here today. When we look back in a few years at the Harris government's record in regard to northern Ontario, I am sure it will stand out on its own against all other governments, even other Conservative governments, as mistreating northern Ontario as no other in this province. I think it's very easy to show that and I'm going to start talking about that in a few minutes, the way this government is basically saying, "We're just going to pull out all support of the north."

It must be important to remember and remind people that when I talk about support for the north, it's northern Ontario that basically started the economy of this province, through its lumbering and mining industry, and still contributes a fair share towards the economy of this province. I think that's very important to keep in mind when we talk about some of the needs and concerns we have for northern Ontario.

First of all, the biggest change that's going to happen here — and I think it's interesting when the parliamentary assistant mentions the number of northern members — the Harris government is going to reduce the number of northern members in this House, after the next election, by one third. We're going to be down from 15 seats, north of the French River, to 10. Again it's the Harris government that has given a disproportionate cut to the representation of northern Ontario in the next Legislature compared to other parts of the province. That's going to weaken our voice, and I think that's a sad day for northern Ontario. I know the vast majority of northerners share that.

Talk about lack of support for the north. Because of the cyclical nature of our economy, that we are dependent by and large upon resource extraction in the mines and in the forests and in the fields of northern Ontario, there has been a very significant government presence in northern Ontario. Not only has that made us feel very much a part of this province, with the vast distance away from the capital that we are, but also those government jobs have given a basic underpinning to our economy. Right now, what we've seen in the last two years is a decimation of those government jobs across the north.

The Ministry of Natural Resources was sort of the government presence for years and years in northern Ontario, long before we ever had a Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. It was a presence almost in every town and hamlet of our northern region. Today we've seen, up to this year, that ministry decimated by one half, and again a disproportionate share of job loss in northern Ontario from that ministry.

We've also seen job losses in the Ministry of Transportation. While we may only have about 10% of the population of Ontario, we have a vast highway network in 90% of the geographical area of our province, vast distances that workers have to travel to their jobs, that families have to travel on visits to family across the north. We depend upon a very strong transportation presence to keep those highways in good repair. We certainly haven't seen that in the last couple of years.

We've just seen last week the latest round of job cuts from MTO across the north, and I believe, and I know my colleagues believe, that we'll see again another succession of deterioration of northern roads across the north. This is not only a cost to people's automobiles and an inconvenience, it also becomes a safety hazard and it jeopardizes people's lives.

Talking about highways, it's really interesting to note, with this downloading exercise that wasn't even included in the mega-week announcements from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, starting last fall and continuing this spring, that the Ministry of Transportation has downloaded the responsibility of many of the provincial highways across the north. What's so interesting about this is that we're talking about massive stretches of highways, such as 72 kilometres in the city of Timmins, which is the largest geographic city in this country. It was the Conservative government of before that created this large city of Timmins, that forced that, and now you've given a wonderful present to the people of the city of Timmins of an additional 72 kilometres of road to maintain.

Yes, they're going to get a one-time cash gift to try to maintain this, but that money is going to run out in a couple of years of maintenance. In the next five, 10 and 15 years, when it's going to be necessary for that highway to be rebuilt, where is the city of Timmins going to get that money to maintain that road? It wasn't their fault that they became the largest city in Canada, but now the province is saying, "We're abandoning all that road network," that connects people right across the north, to the northwest through Highway 101, through Timmins, to Lake Superior, but that portion is going to be given to Timmins and it's going to be their responsibility.

Another example of that is in my riding, in the town of Haileybury, where in the late 1960s another Conservative government decided to build a bypass to Highway 11 through the Tri-town area of Cobalt, Haileybury and New Liskeard along Lake Timiskaming. They decided to build that road about six kilometres outside of town, and now because of that government decision, this Harris government has decided to make a gift of that connecting highway to the town. So now that town has an additional, with all the different connecting links, about 16 kilometres of highway.

They're going to get a cash infusion to start that process off, but in a couple of years again, with our thaw-and-frost cycle in northern Ontario, which is very detrimental to our highway system, it is going to have to be rebuilt. Where is the town of Haileybury going to get the funds to build that highway? It's just not going to be there. I certainly hope the people in my area remember that it was the Harris government that delivered those presents to them, because they are certainly going to feel the cost of that on their local tax bill as the years go by.

The latest round of announcements has been the resident geologists' offices across northern Ontario. In my riding the resident geologist, Mr Jim Ireland, will be taken out of the town of Cobalt. Cobalt has just had a resurgence of its mining because of the removal of the land caution that had been placed on the Temagami-South Timiskaming area over the last 25 years. This area now, because of this new opening, is starting to take off, and

what does this government do? They close down the expertise and the body of knowledge that has been housed in the resident geologist's office in Cobalt. They're going to put it 70 or 80 miles up the road in Kirkland Lake, which is going to make it very inconvenient for the people in the area who are now trying to find some new wealth. It's interesting, because there hasn't been a mining job for years in Cobalt. There is a new interest there. It was Cobalt that opened up the north in 1903, in the very beginning, when silver was discovered. It was the start of mining in northern Ontario.

I don't know what's wrong with this government, but it seems to have forgotten that there is a land mass north of North Bay. Maybe it's because the Premier's riding is in Nipissing and North Bay that that's it, and the world sort of ends there. Certainly for northern Ontario that's the perception, that the Harris government has forgotten all of us who live north of North Bay.

I hope this resolution that my colleague from Kenora has brought forward might be the start to remind this government that we in the north are big contributors to this economy, we love this province, we certainly want to stay as part of this province, and we'd like this government to stop ignoring us.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I am pleased to stand in my place and support the resolution from the member, Mr Miclash, on the election promises that Mike Harris made throughout the north and has broken, every single one of them. He's destroying the north, whether it's education, whether it's health care, whether it's transportation.

They started off by one of the major decisions they made which is affecting northern Ontario, which was to shut down norOntair. Seventeen communities are still scrambling around after norOntair was shut down about a year ago, trying to get the private sector to come in and give proper air service, and it's not happening in a lot of areas. This was a commitment that Mike Harris made to Bearskin Airlines, that if he became Premier, he would shut down norOntair and Bearskin would be expected to pick up the service that norOntair was doing. It's not happening.

They've cut \$6.5 million from the Ministry of Transportation winter road maintenance budget, and now over the last couple of months we find out that they're transferring large amounts of Highway 11, the Trans-Canada Highway — they call them connecting links — that are going through the communities of Kapuskasing, Hearst and Cochrane. The property owners, the taxpayers in those communities, are going to be expected to pick up the tab for all the transports and the amount of traffic that is going from one end of Canada to the other and going through these northern communities. It's very unfair to the people of the north. This is not what people in the north were expecting when Mike Harris was travelling through the election campaign in 1995.

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He was in the hospital in Kapuskasing in the boardroom and he promised that there would only be a few dollars cut in administration costs. There could be savings there. Now we find out that a whole wing of the Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing is closed down, they're

closing down a wing in the Cochrane hospital, they're closing down a wing in the Hearst hospital, and 18% to 20% of the operating costs are being reduced by the Minister of Health. This was not what was promised during the election campaign.

We know that 2,100 MNR people have been laid off or fired, and if they weren't, some of them were moved to North Bay, which is Mike Harris's riding. That was not promised during the election campaign.

They've closed all 11 fire attack bases in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario needs these fire stations to be able to fight the fires. Now we see flooding in Manitoba; we know some of that is going to happen in northern Ontario. You're reducing the MNR and northern development and mines budgets: 126 positions chopped from northern development and mines, \$27 million gone out of the budget.

Everywhere we look they're cutting jobs and eliminating people. They took five seats out of northern Ontario so that they could move them down to southern Ontario and overall reduce the legislative members, but one third coming out of northern Ontario is just too much for having proper representation in the north.

I'd just like to say — I want to leave some time for my colleague — that we're supporting this resolution and we think there's been too many broken promises on behalf of Mike Harris and his Conservative government. They will never elect any members from the north at the rate they're going.

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I would like to begin by stating that I believe that the promises made to the people of northern Ontario in A Voice for the North not only must be kept, but are being kept and will continue to be kept by this government.

Although as the member for Bruce I do not represent a northern riding, I do represent a rural riding and one that abuts the northern territory, and I share similar issues, concerns and challenges.

I am proud that my constituents have recognized that the status quo is no longer acceptable, that in order to have a prosperous future, we must not only accept change but take a leadership role in implementing it and that locally created solutions are the best option for our communities.

In my many conversations with the minister and as a member of the caucus committee that deals with northern development, I know at first hand of the minister's commitment to ensuring that the voices of northerners are heard. As a government, we are well on our way to fulfilling each of the commitments made with respect to education in A Voice for the North. We are implementing changes to ensure that tax dollars are focused directly on the classroom, where students will benefit most.

Our objective continues to be to establish a high-quality, equitable, accountable and cost-effective education system. The changes which have been announced will help to create a more effective system and focus resources on students and the classroom while reducing the financial burden to the local taxpayer.

Forging a new and better working relationship with northern, rural and urban municipalities is a key component of the government's plan to shift taxation and

program responsibilities. These changes will enable better services to be provided at lower cost to all taxpayers: northern, urban and rural.

Of tremendous importance to all of us of course is health care. In *A Voice for the North*, we promised: "In order to preserve and enhance health care services for the people of northern Ontario, a Mike Harris government will guarantee current levels of health care spending. Not one penny will be cut."

We have not only lived up to that promise this year, but we have exceeded it. Despite drastic cuts in federal transfer payments for health care, this government increased the health care budget from \$17.4 billion to \$17.7 billion. At the same time, we promised that we would aggressively root out health-care-related waste, abuse, fraud and duplication, and that we would reinvest the savings in the health care system to improve access and quality to the people of Ontario.

I can assure you that the list of health care reinvestments in northern Ontario alone is impressive. To name just a few: Physicians in northern and rural communities now receive \$70 an hour for working nights, weekends and holidays in hospital emergency departments. The Sudbury General Hospital and the Timmins and District Hospital received the first two MRIs in northern Ontario. A reinvestment of almost \$1 million was made for kidney patients in Thunder Bay and Kenora. First nations communities received funding for friendship centres, palliative care and supportive housing.

As a tremendous boost to Thunder Bay hospital and health services renewal the Minister of Health and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines announced a reinvestment of \$59.4 million for improved health care. This is in the form of world-class facilities at the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital's Port Arthur site and a new forensic psychiatry unit and new spaces for the revitalized St Joseph's General Hospital.

Even as we speak, Northern Development and Mines Minister Chris Hodgson is making a major health care announcement in Sudbury that involves a substantial reinvestment in cancer care in the north.

As these reinvestments are made, however, it is important to recognize that additional new resources do not exist to allow us to stop finding savings in our hospitals before integrating and implementing reinvestment strategies. These changes must be undertaken concurrently, and that is what this government is doing.

We recognize that rural and northern health care must be considered differently than urban centres. We know that quality care, access and economic considerations are of primary importance in making restructuring decisions. As an example of how a community can proactively work together to prepare a model for the health care restructuring commission's consideration, I am pleased to share my riding's experience to date.

In my riding, the Grey-Bruce District Health Council and the restructuring steering subcommittee, the South Bruce-Grey Health Restructuring Alliance, the doctors, nurses and other health care providers, and most importantly, the consumers of health care services in the Bruce and Grey area, are building our solution. To date, we have been able to agree on single governance and admin-

istration for 10 hospitals, on fiscal savings and bed reductions. We are addressing, however, the need for integrated service delivery and are working to provide this as part of our plan for restructured health care in our community. I am confident this plan would allow all hospitals in Bruce and Grey to remain open with beds and emergency care, while still achieving the necessary savings.

As I've said in the past, I believe it is important that we all work together to ensure that the final blueprint for health care in communities and across Ontario is one that provides the highest quality care in the right place at the right time.

I am pleased and proud that the people of Bruce and Grey are working towards this goal as a team and I would encourage communities in the north and across Ontario to do the same. Thank you very much.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to stand up and support the resolution of my colleague the member for Kenora calling on the government to maintain its commitment to its promises made in *A Voice for the North*. It's certainly interesting to hear the new parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development, the member for Brampton North, say that he will be supporting this. I hope he understands that indeed what he will be supporting is, in essence, a call to recognize that commitments have not been followed through, promises have been broken.

The fact is I recognize that it's a new job for the parliamentary assistant. I look forward to welcoming him up to the north next week for the meeting of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association annual gathering in Fort Frances where I think he'll understand and hear a lot of the messages that his former colleague from Grey-Owen Sound heard and listened to. As a result of his forthrightness, he was removed from his position. I trust that the member for Brampton North will show the same fortitude that his predecessor in this position did show, because the important thing that needs to be made very clear in terms of *A Voice for the North* is that there is a whole list of issues that obviously — we are very clear on the fact that promises have been broken.

The major issue from my point of view, the one I'll address today, is the fact that there has been a promise of consultation by the Premier, by this government and by the northern development minister on the issues that affect northerners, a promise that indeed there would be no decisions made without consultation of northerners. The fact is that's the one element that's consistently not been there.

This government, of course, has its own concept of consultation, which is they make the decision and then they go through what is often just a farce of consultation, as we saw with Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act, where they did not listen to the presentations made by everybody in the province, and especially those in the north, saying we should at least maintain the number of seats.

To specifically focus on some of the major things that are happening in the north where no consultation has taken place, when they did not ask northerners how they felt about these issues, one has to simply look at the issue

of the downloading that's taking place right now as a perfectly good example.

The fact is that across northern Ontario the downloading, the dumping of responsibilities, is going to cost northerners and northern municipalities an extraordinary amount of money. It's clearly recognized by everyone, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, that there's at least a \$1-billion shortfall.

In Thunder Bay, for example, my home town, it's very clear that \$15.2 million of extra services will be thrown on the budget for Thunder Bay, which will increase property taxes by 20%. There was no consultation about this. There was no opportunity for northerners to basically talk to the government about this transfer of responsibilities. Certainly in Marathon and Schreiber, there's an extraordinary letter that the reeve of Schreiber, Bob Krause, wrote to the Minister of Northern Development explaining in great detail just what the downloading was going to mean to the town of Schreiber.

1050

One is left with the thought: Is this government's attitude, "May the fittest survive. The communities that just simply have the greatest resources can survive, and if a community can't survive, too bad"? That's the attitude that seems to be coming forward as a result of this government. In this document, *A Voice for the North*, it said there would be consultation; it hasn't happened.

We look at the whole Health Services Restructuring Commission. The fact is that this is something that was thrown at the province and certainly thrown at northerners. Thunder Bay was the first stop they came to. Did they consult northerners about this? They made the decision and then they went through a process of consultation. The fact is three hospitals are closing in Thunder Bay because of the decisions of this commission. The fact is that jobs are being lost in hospitals. The fact is that the government is taking money out of the hospital system while it's restructuring, literally putting the cart before the horse.

It's not a question of restructuring being something that shouldn't be happening; it's a question of restructuring being done in a way that it can actually work. There was no consultation. *A Voice for the North* promised that. The fact is that there is less money going into the system in northern Ontario. They're taking it out of the hospitals. All the reinvestment announcements do not match what is being taken out of the hospitals, and this is a disgrace.

You look at the whole question of unemployment in northern Ontario. Youth unemployment is at 22% in northern Ontario, so the Minister of Northern Development announces the job programs for the north. There have been some very good job programs brought forward by previous governments, one of them being the Nortop program, where the government subsidizes a certain amount of the salary for employers to hire people across the north. Since this government has come into place it's reduced the incentive down to such a point now that one has to be very concerned that indeed employers will be able to take advantage of this program and hire people, let alone the fact that they've simply got less money in the system for it.

Youth unemployment is an extraordinary example of how this government is not taking action to basically do what it said it would do, which is create jobs. Certainly again no consultation in terms of how the job programs are going to work in northern Ontario. They keep saying, "We know what's best," yet they won't listen to us.

One has to ask, did this government consult with northerners, let alone anybody in the province, about the closing of the family support plan regional offices all across the province, eight locations? We know what's happened since then. It's been a disaster. It's been a disgrace. The Attorney General does not want to admit it, but he truly has to. The fact is the system is not working. People, mothers, women and children, custodial parents and children are being deprived of what they have a right to because the system failed. No consultation on the family support plan.

No consultation on the closing of the environmental testing lab in Thunder Bay. This is about the air and water quality in our systems in northern Ontario. Now it's been privatized. Now we know in fact it's going to cost more to provide the service.

The list goes on and on. The fact is that the people of northern Ontario are very angry and very disappointed, to put it politely — "angry" is more the word — about a government that puts across the impression as best it can that indeed it is consulting on all these issues.

Bill 104, the huge school boards that will be left, extraordinary, impossible school boards: They've got to be changed. The fact is, the people in the north are very angry and very upset.

On Monday, April 28, Thunder Bay will be holding a day of action, as others have been held across the province. People from all across the city will be coming out and expressing their disdain and their anger at this government for doing what it's doing. They will be expressing a very strong point of view. Even the North-western Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, as much as I will admit they in essence support some of the things the government is doing, are upset because the government won't consult with them. They've had a regular meeting with the government. The government will not meet with the associated chambers of commerce. Something's wrong.

I proudly stand here and support my colleague's resolution and I'm glad to see that the whole House will be supporting it as well.

Mr Martin: It gives me great pleasure this morning to rise and with the couple of minutes that I have put on the record a couple of thoughts re this very important issue, the issue of how this government does or doesn't support the development of the economy and life in general in northern Ontario.

I was happy to see in the last week or two that the government finally discovered it has within its ranks somebody with some roots in northern Ontario. He came here this morning, Mr Spina, who rightfully says he was born and raised in Sault Ste Marie, to put some thoughts on the record and to say that he was going to support this resolution because he believes the north is an important piece of this province and wants to make sure it stays

viable and alive and a good place for all of us who have chosen to live and work there to continue to do so. I hope, as he becomes more versed in the issues that are out there, as he takes time to sit down and talk with people like myself and the member for Cochrane North and others of us from the north around what we see as the essential issues of the north, he will bring the messages that we share with him back to his government so that they might change the direction and the tack they've taken so far.

However, I was disappointed this morning to not hear from Mr Spina some explanation of some of the comments he made early on in his political career when he suggested that, for example, Algoma Steel in Sault Ste Marie was part of a buggy-whip industry and how that plays into the economic development and the plan they have for the north.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Perhaps it wasn't you, Joe, but it was somebody in your ranks who made that comment and I think you were in support of that by some of the comments you made.

I would hope that doesn't reflect an attitude, because those of us who are watching sense that it does. The economy that is coming at us in Ontario is plugged into this new global reality, and the north, with all of its intricacies and challenges, is not going to fit nicely into that. So we hope that with the appointment of the new parliamentary assistant we will have a more responsive ear in the government of this House.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): It's a pleasure to rise this morning and speak on this resolution from the member for Kenora. I was one of those who had the opportunity to travel the north, and we put A Voice for the North together. I listened to the comments from the member for Kenora with regard to our arriving at Red Lake. I'm not so sure — he had mentioned about some fishing trip, but I certainly didn't see one. Maybe he was on a fishing trip, but I wasn't. I was on an expedition to find out what's going on in the north. We visited the hospital there, we visited the people in tourism, and we visited many people with regard to the municipal planning boards in the north, municipal officials, mining operators, social services workers, natural resources.

We met many interest groups in the north that were concerned with regard to the administration that was taking place there. The business people in the north are concerned about how the NDP administration was operating. They looked at the heritage fund and where the money went out of that heritage fund. It was this government that put the money back into that heritage fund, some \$60 million. Not only that, but there's some \$17 million already committed to the north through projects in the north. You must know that we've spent about \$104 million on the roads in the north, and that will probably be increased.

I'm glad the resolution was brought by the member for Kenora to talk about the north, because it gives us the opportunity to tell the people in the north what we have done. Many projects are under way and will be expanded on.

The known fact is that this government is committed to health care in the north. The envelope is \$17.4 billion and that's increased now by some \$300 million. So we had the opportunity to talk to the doctors; we had the opportunity to talk to the people in the Plummer hospital. We were in Goulais Lake, talking to the people there. We were in Elliot Lake. We were right across the north, talking to people with regard to the land claims that were being negotiated there. Yes, we knew what we were talking about when we talked about A Voice for the North, because it was the people there that we got the input from, not people in the south. We were listening to the people in the north, and I know the member for Kenora knows that.

To say today, as this resolution is saying, that we are not doing things in the north, that's not true. We like to support a resolution to let you people know that we are doing many things in the north and the parliamentary assistant is certainly here to expand on that. I'm sure the parliamentary assistant will take up and be available to the people of the north, which is what we need.

With regard to the resolution today, I want to support it and make sure that the people of northern Ontario are still getting the services they so deserve.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kenora has two minutes.

1100

Mr Micalash: Let me start off by saying that I would like to congratulate the new PA to the Minister of Northern development, the member for Brampton North. I certainly look forward to working with him. I'm actually very pleased that he and his colleagues have decided to support this resolution here today. It says to me that they know we are not happy in the north. I must say that I'm hoping they don't get fired for this, but again, I appreciate their support.

I'd also like to thank the other members for expressing their concerns. We had the member for Algoma, who talked about hospital closings in his riding, the shutting down of many ministry offices throughout northern Ontario, the job loss. We had the member for Timiskaming talking about the reduction of the voice in the north in terms of the reducing of members in the north from the present 15 to 10 members. There is a true concern by some of my northern colleagues regarding job loss. The member for Cochrane North talked about the job loss which is having a devastating effect in his riding.

The member for Bruce suggested that local solutions were being sought. I hope she's going to be in Fort Frances from May 1 to 3, during the NOMA convention, because if she speaks to any of the municipal leaders, any of the councillors, she will find that they're feeling very left out of the process. The member for Port Arthur suggested that this government wasn't listening, that we're talking about youth unemployment in northern Ontario of 22%. Finally, the member for Simcoe East talked about his trip to Red Lake. All you have to do is take a look at the press, who suggested that the entire group would not even speak to the press when they visited to Red Lake; they would not speak to the media.

I would like to thank the members for their support. I look forward to their support during the vote as well.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today to present my private member's resolution:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should consider section 335(f) of Bill 104, by ensuring that the proposed Education Improvement Commission review the entitlements and rights of non-instructional school employees if their positions are to be outsourced and that these non-instructional school employees are consulted and entitled to compete or bid on any position being considered for outsourcing as part of clause 335(3)(f) of Bill 104.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): According to standing order 96(c)(ii), the member has 10 minutes.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise to present my position on this petition which I have just read into the record. I have participated in the many public hearings recently on Bill 104 around the province. The all-party standing committee on social development heard from over 300 presenters across the province. We listened, and I believe we responded. Yesterday, April 23, Bill 104 received third and final reading. I am pleased that our minister has responded with a fair and reasonable number of amendments.

Bill 104 is all about fewer boards, fewer trustees, fewer administrators and more accountability, more money for the teacher and student in the classroom, and more parent involvement. I might add that we adopted 18 amendments in committee, including one of the third party's. This amendment itself will give students a real voice in their education.

For me, the original provisions of section 335 of Bill 104 have been very seriously modified already. I don't wish to take full credit for the present amendment which directs the Education Improvement Commission to examine, where appropriate, the option of outsourcing. I want to stress the importance of "where appropriate." This is not about me and my resolution; it is about listening to my constituents. My resolution is all about responding to my constituents. This is about allowing non-instructional employees to be heard and to be consulted.

It is clear to me that the EIC, the Education Improvement Commission, will no longer promote outsourcing. This indeed is a victory. It proves our government listens. My constituents told me that they were concerned with the threat of losing their jobs. On several occasions my constituents demonstrated at my office. We met and they asked to be allowed to be given the opportunity to compete on a level playing field.

My resolution is dedicated to Miss Sue Bradley, Miss Elizabeth Jones, Mr Gino Turallo, Miss Brenda Stevens, Mr and Mrs Newell, Mrs Diane Carey, Mr and Mrs Forrest, Miss Margo Gadstone, Mrs Vanleuwen and many other constituents who impressed me with their sincerity and dedication and the contribution they make to our school communities. I know and respect many of these constituents. They are honest, hardworking, taxpaying Ontarians. I don't want these people to lose their jobs. I don't want these people to become victims of school boards and their cost-cutting initiatives.

We are talking about educational assistants, school secretaries, school custodians and others, people to whom we entrust the lives of our children. We must have safe, clean, secure schools for our children. These people argue they are a part of the educational team in our children's schools. I agree. Some of my constituents in fact have said that the secretaries run the schools.

At the same time, everyone recognizes that we must allow administration the tools to examine every opportunity to spend taxpayers' money wisely. It is common knowledge today that some services in some of our schools are already outsourced or contracted. Seasonal work, like snow removal and grass cutting, and major maintenance, like roof repairs and other services, are more efficiently handled by specialists and, in some cases, local small business people. No one can argue with allowing our district school administration, where appropriate, to examine alternative service delivery proposals — no one, unless they support the existence of waste and duplication.

Remember that we must focus all our scarce resources in the classroom. I'm asking all members to support this resolution, not only to send a strong signal to the EIC and our new district board, but also to show their individual support for the non-instructional people in our schools.

My resolution is not perfect and I recognize that. However, some opposition members have spoken to me and understand that I am really trying to put pressure on the EIC and the new district board to consult with their workforce. These are the people on the front line. These are people who know where the efficiencies are. Ask them; they will help us cut the cost, eliminate waste and duplication.

Just imagine if all three parties and members here today support this resolution. It is a clear message of support for our educational work team. I look forward to comments from other members.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I must admit I sat here in a bit of amazement listening to this member. If it wasn't for Bill 104 being passed in this House less than 24 hours ago, you could have some sympathy for what he's saying. I guess the real question I have is, if he feels so strongly about it, why wasn't it included in the bill to start off with?

Let me just say at the outset that we are against outsourcing. We don't believe in outsourcing. We don't think it should have been in the bill. Now to come in here, the day after Bill 104 has been passed by this House, when it was objected to by over 600 individuals and organizations that made representations to the committee etc, is a little bit like trying to have it both ways. You simply can't do that.

1110

If the member felt that strongly about it, then he should have been able to at least get the endorsement of his own government members to this notion. When he says that he's listening to the people in his constituency, what about the government listening to the people of Ontario? It's my understanding that just about every group and individual that came to speak to the committee

during its five weeks of hearings was dead set against Bill 104. So if we want to talk about listening, then let's truly listen not only to the people in your own constituency but to the people throughout the province on this education bill.

It is never appropriate to outsource. That's certainly what the unions that are involved with school activities are saying. It is just as important that our students not only have the best classroom education that's available for them but also the best resources, and those resources have a lot to do with the caretakers, with the secretaries and with all the other non-instructional people involved in our school system. The moment we start talking about outsourcing, it will lead to only one result, and that will be a lowering of the standards that people have come to expect from our school system.

I simply say to the member opposite that he has got it wrong. He should have done something about this before. He should have had the courage of his convictions yesterday and stood up and voted against Bill 104. He cannot now, the day afterwards, change his mind on the matter.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The cat is out of the bag, there's no two ways about it. We know now, and the member for Durham East confirms, that Bill 104 is all about an attack on the quality of education across this province in every community, in every school, in every elementary school and every high school across the board. This government is talking about a direct attack and is implementing a direct attack on quality public education. For this government to dare talk about the cutbacks that it is implementing currently here and now, right now, is absurd.

We know that Ontario ranks 46th in per pupil spending among all the state and provincial jurisdictions throughout North America. Heck, New Jersey, that right-wing island of Republicanism often cited by Mr Harris as a model of right-wing rectitude, spends 82% more per student on education than Ontario.

This government is talking clearly, and more clearly than ever now, about privatization, about selling off public institutions so they can be assumed by for-profit and, as often as not, American-based, big corporations so they can make profits at the expense of our health care and, quite frankly, at the expense of our education.

I tell you, Speaker, and I tell the member for Durham East, if he can call himself that, that we are not going to accept any proposition that would force hardworking people like the non-teaching staff, already working hard and working professionally for modest wages — I tell you, modest wages. To force them to compete, to bid in a bidding war with low-wage private contractors, is absurd.

Our goal is to protect the rights of people who have worked in the educational system, partners across the board, be they teachers, educational assistants, secretarial and other support staff or, quite frankly, custodians, and that's what the member is talking about here and now. It is unacceptable from many perspectives. But I also say, from the point of view of the welfare of our children, that for fly-by-night contractors bidding yearly, lowest bidder takes all, to be permitted to bring their workers, low-

wage earners, into our schools to interact with our children exposes our children to risk and it exposes the quality education that we should be striving for to even greater risk.

This motion is not just dumb, it's getting dumber. This motion is an absurd but concentrated attack on working people, on the people who have contributed to the quality of education in this province. It's part and parcel of this government's whole agenda to beat the hell out of workers in Ontario, to lower wages so that greater and greater wealth can be monopolized in the hands of fewer and fewer people. The rich friends of the Harris Tories are the only people who are going to be winners in this sad charade that we have been experiencing now for two years and hopefully for not too many more months longer.

We're not supporting this resolution. It's an out-and-out, blatant attack on our educational system. It's part and parcel of this government's agenda. It's all about, and confirms, the drive towards privatization of long-established public and quality institutions and it's part and parcel of their attack on quality education, wanting to turn us very much into the Mississippi or the Alabama of the north.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I'm pleased to support in principle the resolution put forward by the member for Durham East which supports the entitlements and rights of non-instructional school employees if their positions are to be outsourced under Bill 104.

As this Legislature knows, yesterday marked a historical day in Ontario. The Fewer School Boards Act was passed, allowing us to focus education dollars in the classroom instead of the boardroom. Concentrating our efforts on the classroom is the best way to achieve this.

This resolution supports the amendments to Bill 104 that will give the Education Improvement Commission the ability to look at different ways of delivering services within schools and to treat all employees of school boards with respect and fairness. As a result of the amendments, it is clear that the employees of the existing school boards become employees of the new district school boards. Current collective agreements and employment contracts will be assumed by the new boards.

With respect to the issue of outsourcing non-instructional services, the act does not require or mandate outsourcing of non-instructional services. Through an amendment, we have made it clear that the Education Improvement Commission's mandate would be to study how to facilitate outsourcing, and the most important part is "where appropriate." This amendment was made to underline that we want the commission to take a balanced, fair and comprehensive approach to this issue.

The main points of the resolution before us today are surely points that the commission would want to consider as it carries out that study and develops recommendations. The existing entitlements and rights of non-instructional employees are clearly factors that the commission would need to look at. Consultation with employees and giving the affected employees an opportunity to bid for work if outsourcing should occur are all issues that would be completely appropriate for the commission to view as part of its work.

The Fewer School Boards Act is part of a wider program of education reform aimed at increasing quality and raising standards. Treating all who work in education with fairness is a critical part of achieving a successful transition. I believe the resolution put forward by the member for Durham East supports that goal, so I'm pleased to say that I will support it as well.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'm afraid we are going to disappoint the member for Durham East by indicating that we will not be supporting his resolution today, but I think it's important for me to say why we will not be supporting it, and there are two reasons. The first reason is that, as a result of yesterday, the resolution is simply no longer relevant. I want to point out that Bill 104 became law — in fact it was proclaimed to be law this morning — and therefore amendments to the bill are no longer possible.

The member for Durham East will be very well aware that his own government made the process of amending this law very, very difficult through two closure motions. The first closure motion was the time allocation motion that said that in standing committee we could only have four hours to reflect on all the concerns that had been presented to us in the standing committee's public hearings.

Without any question at all, there were a huge number of concerns expressed about this one clause in Bill 104 in which it says that the new education information commission — I keep calling it the education information commission, because I think it is to put forward the government's agenda, but it's called the Education Improvement Commission — was to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to...facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards."

1120

It was correctly pointed out during the standing committee hearings that that left the education commission no leeway to say, "It's not appropriate to outsource non-instructional services in a school setting." They were directed to tell school boards how to do it.

That concern was repeated over and over again, and I know the member for Durham East is well aware of that and that he presents this resolution in response to those concerns. I want to make it clear that I respect that.

Of course, our ability to discuss that and to make amendments, to look at amendments other than the one that the government proposed, was cut off, because at the end of those few hours we had to consider all amendments to have been read. We could have no discussion. We couldn't discuss why the resolution that might have been proposed by the member for Durham East, that had been proposed at that point in time by the member for Durham East, would have been preferable to the amendment the government presented, because all discussion was closed off. We never got a chance even to discuss this issue of outsourcing and how to make it less of a very real concern for people in the educational community and for parents.

I have to respect the tenacity of the member for Durham East in bringing his resolution forward today, even though Bill 104 became law yesterday. He obviously felt

a conviction and a commitment to want to express his concerns, even against his own government's actions. But I think it was equally clear, as the government proposed its own amendment to this clause, that they were not prepared to consider the proposals of the member for Durham East, which were already a matter of record.

The government could well have brought forward the amendments proposed by the member for Durham East in the committee of the whole, had the government not cut off our opportunity to consider further amendments in committee of the whole. You'll recall, Mr Speaker, that there was a second closure motion brought in on Bill 104 so that we never got a chance to go into committee of the whole to even consider, at that point in time, this proposed amendment from the member for Durham East.

It is obvious that his own government, fully aware of the concerns he was bringing to this, fully aware of the proposal he was making, said: "No, we are not prepared to amend this bill to allow consultation with employees. We are not prepared to amend the bill to allow employees to bid on positions which might be outsourced." I respect the member for Durham East for continuing to bring this forward and I regret very much that the government did not provide the member for Durham East, or any other members of this assembly, an opportunity to debate and fully consider the concerns that have been presented on this issue, as on all parts of Bill 104.

The member for Durham East has pointed out that the government did make an amendment to this clause. I want to duly note that. They added the words "where appropriate" to the clause so that the commission is no longer directed, without any leeway at all, to tell boards how to outsource. But I would suggest very strongly that this is not a modification which goes nearly far enough. As the member for Kingston and The Islands has said, when it comes to non-instructional services, services provided to support students in an educational setting, it should never be considered appropriate to outsource those services.

That's the second reason we would not have been supporting this resolution even had Bill 104 not been proclaimed law as of this time. We would not be supporting it because, although it softens — I acknowledge that it softens — the impact of outsourcing somewhat, because it provides for consultation and it does allow for the bidding, it still carries an endorsement of outsourcing and we cannot in any way endorse outsourcing.

We heard over and over again the concerns at committee about outsourcing non-instructional services in an educational setting. We particularly heard from parents. Obviously, we heard from members of unions, from school board employees, who understand the value of their work and who wanted us to understand that value, but we also heard from parents.

We heard from parents who came to us and said: "If you start looking at outsourcing any of the non-instructional support services in our schools, whether it is our janitorial service, whether it's our secretarial service, whether it's the libraries or the guidance services, whether it is the psychological assessment services, this presents a danger to our children."

Parents were worried about the safety of students in the school if they have strangers coming into the school. They said: "We need continuity of personnel in the school. We need people who know our children and know our children's needs. We believe that every person in the school is an integral part of the school community. We don't want to be in a situation where we end up with dial-a-cleaner and somebody comes in to do the cleaning that day, or where we need some extra secretarial help so we go to the temporary secretarial pool but the people coming in don't even know the names of our kids, let alone how to reach the family if there's a problem."

We heard from people who are providing psychological assessment support. I happen to have some background in that area and I know for a fact that unless the person doing the assessment of that student knows the educational context for that student's learning, they cannot properly assess that student. This is dangerous for students.

Outsourcing of non-instructional support services should never be seen to be appropriate. An attempt to soften the blow is not sufficient if it carries the endorsement of outsourcing.

I know another of my colleagues is anxious to speak on this and I'm sure he will refer to what he has heard from people in his community. I want to make it very clear that we have heard from virtually all members of the educational community, who have said they cannot and do not want to see this resolution supported. We had responses from teachers' federations, who speak to the value of the non-instructional support services in the school and who do not want to see any resolution passed which implies endorsement of outsourcing. We had all the submissions that were made at committee. We had repeated submissions from members of unions, as I say, who understand the value of the work that they do, not just in their own job description areas but the contribution they make to the school as a whole.

The last point I would like to make is that we also heard at committee from two boards, one of them the Simcoe county board, who have tried outsourcing and who have cancelled it because they found, "When [in this case] the maintenance and custodial services were contracted out and subsequently brought back in-house, a comparative study demonstrated that our members could provide higher-quality service in a more efficient manner." It is good for kids to keep the non-instructional support services in the school with full-time school personnel.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. I would open my remarks by suggesting to the House that our caucus, the NDP caucus, does not agree with the Liberal idea that somehow this resolution softens the impact of Bill 104 on workers in the education system, particularly the non-instructional school employees. In fact, if anything, this resolution is adding salt to the wound, because within this resolution is clearly the acceptance that, first, privatization will take place and, second, successor rights are gone.

It's interesting that the Minister of Education has spent the last couple of days trying to distance himself from the

idea that this government would consider removing successor rights or overriding job protection clauses in collective agreements that are now in place with CUPE.

But the fact is that this resolution speaks clearly to the fact that those successor rights are gone. If they were still in place, you wouldn't have any question of who gets those jobs or what are they paid or what their benefit levels are or what their job security rights are because that's what's contained in the collective agreement. Successor rights, which of course this government has taken away from Ontario public sector workers — everyone else gets to keep them, but they've stripped their own employees of those rights.

We know what that game is. It's all about privatizing, hiving off those services where profit can be made and selling them to their friends so they can make money off of public services: direct taxation, if you will, from those who are paying taxes for services into the pockets of those who want to make a profit.

In and of itself, there's nothing wrong with making a profit. What we find obscene is that that profit will be generated from the provision of services to the public that are now provided by the public so that the only priority is that the services the people need, they're getting.

This resolution says that successor rights for CUPE workers in schools, and I would suggest by extension other CUPE public sector workers providing services at the municipal level, are gone — gone because the contract is gone. As soon as the job is privatized, no more contract, no more job security, no more vacation entitlements, no more decent pay, no more decent benefits. All gone, stripped away, decades of rights that workers fought for and deserve. Gone by the stroke of a pen.

1130

But it goes further than that. It says, and this is what we find so insulting, that these workers, these non-instructional school employees — and it's nice that the member now wants to talk about the fact that they're team members. He should slide over, he's not that far away, and talk to the Minister of Education about the fact that the custodial people, the janitor services, the maintenance services, the transportation services, the clerical services, all those services are as important to the classroom as the teacher standing at the front of the room.

For him to stand there today and talk about teamwork, while his Minister of Education attacks the ability of school boards to provide those other services, is further insulting not just the people affected here but insulting the intelligence of the public that somehow they aren't going to understand that all these other services are just as important as what's provided in the front of the room by that all-important teacher.

He goes on to say about those very workers, those non-instructional school employees, that they get to be "consulted." We know what consultation means to this government. Usually it happens after the fact. Go talk to the firefighters. Go talk to police. Go talk to nurses. Go talk to all those people who have already felt the heavy end of the boot of this government when it comes to consultation.

In fact, the only time we can ever get them to go out in public and review what they've already decided to do,

to allow the public some minor input of their opinion, is after we've forced them, by way of pressure in this House, to get out into the public. Certainly the member for Nepean, who is gesturing wildly over there — I'm not sure what all that means — would know because of the experience he had with the Employment Standards Act, when you stripped workers of their rights in that bill, what we had to do to force this government to go out publicly. They talk about consultation. You've been in government long enough that people know what consultation means to you.

Those workers whose jobs are contracted out, here's the scenario: Bill 104 sets the framework for this government to take control in a way that's never been seen in the history of the province of what happens in our schools. They've already stripped the equivalent of \$1 billion out of our school system, and by the way, that makes it better: "If \$1 billion taken out makes it a better system, imagine what another \$1 billion would do to make it a better system." That's the logic. Bill 104 is going to provide this government with the ability to do what the Minister of Education is already on the record as saying he wants to do, and that is: "Take another \$1 billion out of our education system."

For all the government's talk about the fact that there's all this excess fat and that all this is not affecting the classroom, I would suggest to anyone listening today to talk to the teachers. Talk to the teachers. Don't buy into the argument that they're just a special interest group and deserve to be ignored. You know that when you go and consult and meet with those teachers, what they have to say about your kids matters to you.

It's a very rare occasion when a parent does not respect what a teacher is saying about their child's development in class. Talk to that very teacher and ask them whether or not the classroom has been affected already. Then ask that teacher what's going to happen if you take another \$1 billion out of the education system; or talk to the trustees, because they are honourable elected people and, just like the members of the government, deserve to be recognized, and all the members here in the opposition. Everybody is honourable except when you decide to put that label "special interest" on someone's forehead as you've done with school board trustees. They're just as honourable, members of the government, as you or anyone else in elected office and they deserve to be respected.

I would say to parents, talk to the teachers, talk to the trustees, talk to people who work in the system, talk to the people who clean the classroom, talk to the people who drive the buses, talk to the people who are in the system. Yes, listen to what the minister says. It's not like that's not an important point of view. He is the Minister of Education. But don't end your search for the truth there. Talk to other people, your neighbours, relatives. It's an important part of our society; it's an important part of our economy. Talk to the students. Ask them what's happening in their classrooms; ask them what they think about the idea that there be less and less money available.

That's what Bill 104 is meant to do. They're going to find this \$1 billion by privatizing as much of the non-

instructional school work as they can. In doing that, they're going to take away a decent-paying job from ordinary citizens of this province who are just trying to provide for their families. That's what you've done in every case where you've privatized, and we know there's a big movement coming. You're going to privatize those jobs. You're going to strip away the rights those workers are entitled to in terms of job protection, health and safety protection, vacation entitlement, decent pay — all the things that people are entitled to. How about a decent dental plan for their kids? All those things matter. You've got them. Every one of the members across the way has those kinds of benefits. Why isn't that good enough for people working in the school system? Why? Because you've got to find the \$5 billion to pay for your tax cut. That's what it's all about.

You seem to think people won't understand that or they don't get it or that's beyond them. Guess again. That's why all those people came out to the hearings on Bill 104. That's why there are no teachers, no school trustees, nobody involved in the education system who buys your phoney argument that cutting \$1 billion made the system better and, "When we cut the second billion it's going to be great."

There's the scenario; that sets the stage. What does this resolution do? This resolution says to those workers I've spoken of today, who have had their jobs privatized and their rights stripped away, "You can compete or bid on that job." Given the number of people you've put out of work, given the number of decent-paying jobs you've already eliminated, you've got the perfect scenario with this resolution. What's that scenario? Have as many unemployed people as you can, underemployed, making as little as possible, and then when you throw out the crumbs of privatized jobs, have them all fight each other for those jobs.

How will they do it? Who will work for the lowest? Who will work for the fewest benefits? The workers compete and undercut each other. That's what this says: "Your job's been privatized. You've got no collective agreement. Under this resolution you'd have the right to fight somebody who's been underemployed or unemployed for months or years to see who gets that job." What does that scenario replace? It replaces decent-paying jobs, something that you don't support because it gets in the way of your pals making the maximum amount of profit. It's that scenario that we find so absolutely reprehensible, and that's why we will not support this insulting resolution.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I am very pleased to rise to support this resolution of the member for Durham East. Certainly both of us work together quite commonly on issues with the Northumberland and Clarington Board of Education. I'd like also to point out the importance of Bill 104 that just passed third reading last night, because now we'll have some regard for local ratepayers and taxpayers that has not been going on in the past. I'd like to compliment a trustee in my riding, Marg Connor, who has stood up to the board and its undemocratic and very authoritarian approach to some of the local board decisions and activities.

1140

What this resolution that is being put forward by the member for Durham East seeks to address is really quite simple: It is not public sector versus private sector, it is competition versus monopoly. In a monopoly there is little incentive to do better, to please the customer. This has led to inefficiencies in many instances, to added costs, to mediocre performance and to waste. By introducing some competition into the mix there is an incentive to do better, and to do better for less. There's plenty of evidence that a system of public-private sector competition works, and it works very well indeed.

Interjection: Where?

Mr Galt: I'll tell you. In their landmark book, *Reinventing Government*, by Osborne and Gaebler, the authors recount the story of Phoenix, Arizona. Some time ago, in the throes of a tax revolt — sound familiar? we're having it all across Ontario — Phoenix decided to contract out their garbage collection services. Predictably, the union protested, and protested vehemently. Despite that, the city council met and eventually decided to go ahead, but they allowed the existing waste collection department to also bid on the job.

Public works divided the city into some seven districts and began bidding them out one at a time. Three times the waste collection department submitted bids and three times they lost, but the losses forced the department to rethink the way they were doing business. They asked their drivers to redesign their routes. They asked them to redesign their work schedules. They created quality circles and a labour-management productivity committee. They also developed a new cost-accounting system to track precisely how much their services cost. Finally, they installed a suggestion program that gave employees 10% of the savings generated. In short, they completely redesigned their management strategy.

Gradually the department's costs came down, and when the next contract came up, they won. Morale soared. It was an amazing transformation in this city and in this department, and when they finally whipped the private sector people, the public employees knew they had done it because they indeed were the best. What's more, within a few years the city department had won back all of the contracts they had lost.

Since then, Phoenix has used competition not only in garbage collection but in landfill operations, custodial services, street repair, printing and security. The city auditor has estimated savings of \$20 million over the first 10 years of this project, but since competition has forced all bid levels down, this is but a fraction of their real savings. That's what competition did for Phoenix, and it can work here too.

It's also my understanding, closer to home, that the Ottawa-Carleton French board of education, through reduction of their administration and operating expenses and through contracting out, really using competition in the non-teaching services, cut a deficit in 1992 of some \$8.5 million. Now they're breaking even and actually having a surplus and at the same time putting more teachers into the classroom and buying more computers for the students.

I wholeheartedly support this resolution being put forth by the member for Durham East. While it's true that many would prefer to maintain their comfortable monopoly and sit in their comfortable pew, competition does drive to embrace innovation and strive for excellence. It holds the key that will unlock the bureaucratic gridlock that hamstrings so many public agencies, but most of all, it will help us to ensure that taxpayers receive the best value for the money they pay and work so hard to earn. For these reasons, I enthusiastically support the resolution put forth by the member for Durham East.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm pleased to rise today in support of the member for Durham East's resolution.

I think it's important at this time to focus on what we're dealing with: non-instructional school employees. The resolution speaks: If their positions are to be outsourced, these non-instructional school employees will be consulted and entitled to compete or bid on any position being considered for outsourcing as part of clause 335(3)(f), of Bill 104.

Clause 335(3)(f) of Bill 104 clearly states that the Education Improvement Commission is to "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations to the minister on how to...facilitate," where appropriate, "the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards." The Education Improvement Commission is to make recommendations to the Minister of Education.

The operative word of Bill 104 is "outsourcing." We truly have to understand what that term means, because obviously the opposition doesn't. What it means is using a third party to provide the service rather than the district school boards. What we're dealing with here is outsourcing where it's appropriate, and "where it's appropriate" should involve considerations such as safety, cost consideration, efficiency, accountability and the quality of the education.

The member from Thunder Bay indicated that, from my riding, the Simcoe Board of Education dealt with janitorial services in terms of outsourcing, but one of the things they didn't do was consider whether it was appropriate before they went out and did it. Certainly in the hearings that I was involved in, they gave us the input of what they did and in fact they changed their decision and went back to using the school board employees, after they made due consideration of the factors they should have looked at before they even did that. I think it's important when you look at Bill 104, that the changes that have been made to outsourcing — the mandate is to do it where it's appropriate.

I'll return now to the resolution. It's important to note that if outsourcing occurs, non-instructional school employees are to be consulted and entitled to compete. That's going to occur after all the legal rights which they would be entitled to, collective agreements if applicable, would have been considered by the minister and by the Education Improvement Commission. Nothing is out of line with respect to the legal rights we're looking at here.

I support the resolution because it gives capable people an opportunity to continue to serve the public if they so

wish. It also promotes business opportunity and accountability to taxpayers, because obviously the opposition isn't involved in accountability to the taxpayer. They would prefer a system where you basically go out blindly and leave the system as is, don't make changes that the public is crying out to be made. This is a government that believes it should be making change where it's necessary, versus the status quo which is supported by the opposition parties.

I think under Bill 104 we're promoting accountability to taxpayers. I believe taxpayers have a right to ensure, through us, that they get the best service possible. When we talk about the resolution of the member for Durham East, I think it's very clear that the resolution is relevant, and it's very relevant to the people who could be affected, the non-instructional school employees. It's also relevant when we talk about outsourcing, because for those people who believe change is necessary to the education system and for those who believe the quality of education in the classroom is where we should be putting our funding, obviously outsourcing is relevant.

I'm in support of this resolution that's been put forth by the member for Durham East because it's relevant. It also provides the protections and the fairness that we're looking for when we're dealing with Bill 104, because the mandate that's been given to the Education Improvement Commission is to report to the minister after consulting the public. The mandate is very clear. The opposition parties know what the mandate is; the language is very clear and the resolution of Mr O'Toole is very clear also. When you look at this from a very commonsense approach, it's a fair resolution and I support it.

1150

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I congratulate the member for Durham East for taking this initiative to take an independent position on behalf of his constituents, the workers; not the political agenda of certain union leaders. Rather he has forcefully and very articulately represented the views of his constituents.

These changes in terms of restructuring, to show the non-partisan nature of the member for Durham East, are much of what the federal Liberal government has done in Ottawa. They have opened up an office, the regional economic diversification office for Ottawa-Carleton, to help the public servants that the federal Liberal government, some 45,000 federal public servants that the Chrétien government is letting go. This office will help those folks potentially bid and take over the contracts that they've been letting go. I'm pleased to note the member for Durham East is using that fine example that the federal Chrétien government is doing in Ottawa with the good number of displacements that we've regrettably seen in that.

This alternative service delivery obviously is the key, because the public is very clear. The public told the member for Durham East, as they told me, that they want the spending made in the classroom, the priority and money to go into the classroom, and I commend the member for Durham East.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I too am pleased to partake in this debate. As we've heard from previous

speakers, we know that outsourcing is certainly going to take away from the community atmosphere, the continuity in our schools. As a former educator, I certainly knew how important that was. We've heard from parents, we've heard from administrators, we've heard from educators, and they too have told us about the great danger in terms of outsourcing. Again I would, as a former educator, like to get those views relating to non-instructional support services on the record. I truly am concerned that we will take the community out of the school and forget about the people who should be at the forefront, the kids that we service.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In addition to the people from Cornwall who have been speaking to John Cleary, the member for Cornwall, about these matters, I have received representations from people in our community. I'm very familiar with the education system and how important it is that you have an educational team; not that you segregate the people, not that you demean and downgrade some positions at the expense of others. If you talk to the teachers who are in the classroom, if you talk to the administrators, such as principals and vice-principals, they will all tell you that if you don't have that educational team, if you don't have people who are familiar with education, if you don't have people who have some degree of experience, then you simply don't have a coordinated school system.

This government is setting out, once again, to downgrade and degrade the position of people such as caretakers, cleaners, clerks, educational assistants, library technicians, maintenance personnel, secretaries, special education support technicians, youth care workers, child care workers, counsellors, technicians, groundskeepers, a number of people who play a very significant role, who have been loyal to boards of education and loyal to the students that they ultimately serve within a system.

The member for Fort William, the Liberal education critic, has outlined many of the significant roles that they play over and above those which would be found in their job descriptions. For this government now to be striking fright into the hearts of these people, many of whom are long-term employees, threatening that out there they're going to end up with severe reductions in their wages or salaries, the removal of some of their collective agreement winnings in terms of the services that are provided, I believe is reprehensible on the part of this government. I know they continue to play this role.

If you ask the students, if you ask those who are not in the categories found in this particular matter today, they would all say this government should abandon its efforts to outsource and to privatize people who have been dedicated educational employees over the years. This is simply an unnecessary assault on vulnerable people in our society.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham East has two minutes.

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to thank those who participated in my resolution today. The member for St Catharines-Brock, who I might add is the new parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I thank you for your comments; also the member for Northumberland,

a good friend — we do work together very hard — and of course the member for Simcoe Centre, who is a very well respected labour specialist and has been involved in much of the legislation this government has been dealing with.

From the opposition benches, I was flattered that the education critic, the member for Fort William, made comments that my resolution was no longer relevant. Yes, it's clear that the discussion and the input that I had clearly moved the minister and this government to make changes to clause 335(3)(f) to take the hard language out of the original section of the bill.

I go on to acknowledge the comments made by the members for Kenora, St Catharines, Welland-Thorold and Hamilton Centre. To the member for Hamilton Centre, the NDP government soon forgets the hard blow they gave the working people in our schools. The social contract took almost \$1 billion out of education right off the backs of the lowest-paid workers in our educational system in Ontario.

My resolution is about giving people a chance to compete, to be consulted. It's about you showing your support for the non-instructional school employees: educational assistants, secretaries, custodians and others who are the lowest-paid employees in our schools. Each member should have the courage to stand up today and support this legislation and not the traditional party lines. This resolution is not about pro- or anti-union sentiments; it's about people being given a chance. My resolution is simple and humble, and I present it by the people and for the people. Have the courage to support it.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 71, standing in the name of Mr Miclash. Is it the wish of the House that this resolution carry? It is carried.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 72, standing in the name of Mr O'Toole. Is it the wish of the House that this resolution carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

The Acting Speaker: Mr O'Toole has moved private member's notice of motion number 45. Those in favour will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Smith, Bruce
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Spina, Joseph
Carroll, Jack	Jordan, W. Leo	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David

Doyle, Ed
Fisher, Barbara
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom

Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John

Vankoughnet, Bill
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Martin, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	McLeod, Lyn
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Miclash, Frank
Cordiano, Joseph	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario	Wildman, Bud
Gerretsen, John	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 32; the nays are 17.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the resolution carried.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you would allow me to make a special commendation to Clerk at the Table Todd Decker for calling his first recorded vote so flawlessly.

The Acting Speaker: I will indeed.

This session being completed, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise today on behalf of the members to recognize that April 24 is remembrance day for the Armenian genocide. It was 82 years ago, I think all members remember, that 1.5 million Armenians were brutally killed — these were women and children, elderly — in a deliberate act of genocide.

Today, April 24, is the day the Armenian community and indeed the whole world remember that genocide, and tonight in front of the Legislature at 10 o'clock young people from the Armenian community will be there. With us in the gallery today are Aline Derkevorkian, Arby Ghazarian and Anastasia Chrysoudakis, who will be with the young people tonight.

There is a continuing unfinished piece of this sad saga, and that is that to this day those who were responsible for the genocide have failed to acknowledge their responsibility or to apologize. For the Armenian community, indeed for all of us, that wound cannot begin to heal until the Turkish community accepts responsibility and apologizes.

Finally, the importance for all of us is that we cannot let an act of genocide be forgotten. Hitler once said to many around him in planning his Holocaust, "Who today remembers the Armenian genocide?" In other words, if the world community had stood behind the Armenian community, perhaps Hitler would never have been able to do his dastardly deeds.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): There was an announcement made in Sudbury today by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines which all of us in this House and in the north appreciate very much. It was an announcement about health care and more money into the cancer strategy that's being put in place up there.

Even though that is good news, and God knows we need more money into health care in the north because of the savaging that's happened to that system over the last couple of years, again this government has left us less than fully and totally excited about this because this announcement is still full of holes and raises more questions than it answers. Two of those questions I will highlight very briefly here today.

One of them is the fact that there was absolutely no mention made in the announcement by anybody at the conference or attached to it about the wonderful work that is going on in Sault Ste Marie under the able guidance of Dr David Walde, who was the forefather of this kind of delivery of oncology care in the north as far back as 1974.

The second is the fact that this money is coming from the northern Ontario heritage fund, a fund that we thought was very limited in its scope and its terms of reference to community economic development. Now we find that it's going to be given to health care. For some of us that will be good news, but we need to know if that is going to be the case and if the guidelines have been changed now so that other health care operations can apply to the heritage fund and know they're going to get some money.

PERTH COUNTY ECONOMY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise in the House today to announce more good news for the riding of Perth. Thanks to the policies of this government and the initiative of the constituents of my riding, Perth county is prospering once again.

I make this statement based on the figures which were recently released for farm building construction in 1996. Last year, farmers in Perth county applied for building permits on renovations and new building construction worth a total of \$24.4 million. This is indeed a sign that the farming and construction industries in Perth, and indeed all of Ontario, are booming.

This boost in the rural economy is due in large part to the retail sales tax rebate which was announced by the Minister of Finance in the 1996 budget. The initiative has assisted farmers by allowing for rebate of provincial sales tax on materials purchased to either help build or modernize a structure used exclusively for farm purposes. The recently announced continuation of this program through the new fiscal year will undoubtedly result in further expansion in farming in Perth. This is good news and deserves to be recognized.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture for their support for the farmers of Ontario and for living up to this government's promise to be responsive and accountable to the farmers of Ontario.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Yesterday in the Legislature the Minister of Culture did something quite shameful, something for which she should apologize. In response to a setup question from one of her colleagues about Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act, the minister portrayed one presentation made at public hearings in Thunder Bay as indicative of the support this bill is receiving in northern Ontario.

Such a gross distortion of the facts cannot be tolerated. Of the 17 presenters to the all-party committee, 16 expressed grave concerns about this very flawed piece of legislation. The library communities in Thunder Bay, Ignace, Beardmore, Atikokan, Dryden, Red Rock and Geraldton told the committee that a loss of provincial transfers could spell the end of libraries in their communities, and all of them spoke on the need to maintain majority citizen participation on library boards.

Minister, we all understand that you would prefer to have found more support for this bill, a bill that downloads responsibility totally on to municipalities and removes all provincial responsibility for the operation of our treasured public library system. But please don't insult all the people who drove hundreds and hundreds of miles to express their concerns about this legislation, and do not renege on your commitment, stated at the beginning of the hearings, that you would accept amendments based on presentations to the committee.

If you want to retain any credibility as culture minister, you must not play games with Bill 109. Unless you wish to confirm that public hearings are simply a farce, apologize to our northern library boards, and please listen to their message.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): The Fewer School Boards Act, Bill 104, may have passed, but the people's concerns and questions have not. Because I wanted to make sure the people of Cochrane North had a say on Bill 104 and because this government did not care about sending the committee to our area three weeks ago, I had public hearings in Kapuskasing over this highly controversial bill. This is what the parents, school workers, trustees and ordinary citizens had to say to this government:

First of all, slow down. As with other pieces of legislation, this government has rammed through Bill 104 without giving people the opportunity to fully understand the content and what it actually means for our education system.

Second, the size of the new boards is a great concern for very many. The amalgamation of the school boards will actually create in northern Ontario two boards that are each the size of France. Does this make sense to you? There is no doubt that larger boards with fewer trustees will mean vastly reduced community representation and involvement in local education.

A large number of people are very concerned about the fact that Bill 104 is silent on crucial details such as the new funding formula, collective agreements and a

commitment from this government to maintain current education spending. When will you give us the details on these crucial issues?

Let me tell you this: The fight is not over. We will be there when you bring forward legislation to deal with collective agreements and a new funding formula. Bill 103 and Bill 104 may have passed, but people's fight for democracy is well and alive.

1340

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): All political parties make promises during election campaigns. One party at the federal level in 1993 promised "Jobs, jobs, jobs." However, unlike the present Liberal government in Ottawa, the Mike Harris government is keeping its promises. And unlike the Deputy Prime Minister, we're not Copp-ing out.

The Mike Harris government is doing what needs to be done —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. This is members' statements. Everyone deserves the same opportunity to put their member's statement, regardless of your position on whatever they're saying.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Yes, but he's provoking us.

The Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, that's not provocation.

I would ask the member for Etobicoke-Humber to continue.

Mr Ford: All political parties make promises during election campaigns. One party at the federal level in 1993 promised "Jobs, jobs, jobs." However, unlike the present Liberal government in Ottawa, the Mike Harris government is keeping its promises and, unlike the Deputy Prime Minister, we are not Copp-ing out.

The Mike Harris government is doing what needs to be done in order to stimulate the economy and bring jobs and growth. Jobs are up because the economy is showing so many positive signs. Exports and housing are both booming and bringing about jobs.

What the opposition doesn't want to hear is that spending on health care in Ontario is up, even when the critics of the government, in their usual doom-and-gloom fashion, claim we are cutting health or somehow endangering patients. The truth is that the Harris government is keeping its promise to maintain health care, even as the federal government cuts \$2.1 billion in transfer payments to Ontario. We are putting patients first and finding ways to change spending priorities so that Ontarians continue to enjoy state-of-the-art care.

The real Ontario, where you and I and our constituents live, is beginning to enjoy the economic revival we need and deserve.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to hear it again.

The Speaker: The member for Essex South seeks unanimous consent to hear it again. I heard a no.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I see those pesky, badgering, condescending, élitist members of the news media were trying to trick our Premier yesterday by demanding that he tell them the name of the favourite book he has read. The more cynical and suspicious of the pack were probably trying to relate the painfully long pause between the question and the answer to Bill 109, the bill which many believe will be extremely detrimental to libraries in Ontario and the people who read books in those libraries.

As Conservative government members have suggested so often, however, the media were simply trying to embarrass our Premier, quite unfairly, I might add. The reason it took Premier Harris 31 seconds to answer the question, "What is your favourite book?" was simple: The Premier was trying desperately to remember the title of the newly released book entitled Mike Harris's Ontario: Open for Business; Closed to People.

Edited by Diana Ralph, André Régimbald and Nérée St-Amand and published by Fernwood Publishing, their excellent, objective evaluation of the Mike Harris regime is available in paperback for only \$19.95, a sum that could be found in your portion of the income tax cut that will force the government to borrow millions to finance and cut billions more in health, education and other services to achieve.

To quote from the cover of the book, "It explores the global corporate agenda that drives the Harris government — its links to other Conservative governments, its manipulation of deficit hysteria and its attack on democracy itself."

The title, again, is not Mr Silly but rather Mike Harris's Ontario: Open for Business; Closed to People.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The Minister of Health approved the 1996-97 operating budget for the Sault area hospitals on the basis that the changes at Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing and Thessalon Hospital, which are satellite hospitals to the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital, would be monitored by the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital board and by the Algoma District Health Council. These changes included the closure of all in-patient beds at these rural hospitals and the maintenance of 24-hour emergency service at the hospitals, but with only one nurse on duty per shift.

It has come to my knowledge that neither the Plummer Memorial hospital nor the Algoma District Health Council is in fact monitoring the changes to determine whether adequate services are being provided at the Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing or at the Thessalon Hospital.

Also, interestingly enough, at Thessalon they've applied for a grant to renovate the building they are going to move into, and it has been denied by the northern Ontario heritage fund. I would hope the minister would act on this, carry out the proper monitoring that was promised and ensure that the funding is made available to Thessalon so we can have proper access to hospital services in these two communities.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Yesterday's third reading passage of Bill 104 marked a historic beginning for Ontario's educational system. With the province taking the lead in establishing consistent, high academic standards and a province-wide curriculum, all Ontario students living anywhere in the province will now have the same excellent levels of instruction and standard course contents.

These and other initiatives will better rationalize our educational system and lead to an increase in the overall quality of education that our students are receiving. At long last, as a direct result of Bill 104, educational spending will be accountable to the people of Ontario as resources will be refocused on students and teachers in the classroom.

Yesterday teachers, trustees, parents and students came to Queen's Park to say they are in favour of putting more money towards students, not bureaucrats, and towards classrooms, not school administration.

Bill 104 represents a landmark beginning in the process of education reform, which the people of Ontario have been asking for for the last decade. I am proud that my government, the government of Premier Mike Harris, has demonstrated the courage and the political will to fulfil our commitment to renewed educational excellence for the sake of our children and their future success, for their success is Ontario's success.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator of Ontario has been pleased to assent to a certain bill.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): On Wednesday, April 2, 1997, the member for Algoma (Mr Wildman) asked me to consider whether the contents of a memo allegedly prepared by the Ministry of Education staff constitute a prima facie case of contempt.

I want to begin by apologizing for the delayed ruling. But I also note that it is only the fourth sessional day since the point was raised.

I have reviewed the representation made to me that day and the contents of the memo carefully and I must come to the conclusion that it does not constitute contempt for this House. If it did originate from ministry staff, and there is nothing in the memo to indicate that it did, it is nothing more than a diligent preparation based on a bill that is in the legislative process and may become law. I find this quite different than the wide public distribution of a document which implies by its wording that the bill is already law.

On December 20, 1989, when presented with similar matters, Speaker Edighoffer had this to say:

"It is perfectly valid for the public service to proceed with plans based on a bill that is already in the system in order to be able to act swiftly, once that bill becomes law. It goes without saying that if the bill is amended during the legislative process, then the public service must take note and act accordingly."

I concur with Speaker Edighoffer's view and find no prima facie case of contempt. However, I do thank the member for bringing this to my attention.

1350

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to rise briefly and correct the record, correct my record, on something that took place yesterday during question period. You may recall that I asked the government House leader a question yesterday, in the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with respect to the intended appointees of the government to the transition team and the financial advisory board under Bill 103.

Particularly in making the supplementary question, in which I asked the government House leader whether the government was intending to send those intended appointees through the ABC committee, the committee where intended appointees are reviewed, in rereading the question, I think I left the impression that the decision was at the discretion of the government. Upon reviewing the rules and upon reviewing the bill, it's my contention that in fact the government doesn't have any choice but has to refer those names forward. I just wanted to correct the record in terms of any misconception I may have left as a result of the question yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It's time for oral questions. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Minister of Education.

The Speaker: I don't see him. Is he not here?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, he is scheduled to be here. Perhaps this question could be stood down.

The Speaker: Stand it down? Okay.

HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I'd like to ask you, on behalf of the people of Ontario, about the character of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We understood when you started the commission, just to quote some of your words back to you, you had said that the commission would take all the politics out of restructuring the hospital system and that it would be at arm's length from yourself and from cabinet. I want you to give an assurance to people that this is indeed how you see that system operating.

I particularly want to cite a letter from one of your colleagues, the minister responsible for francophone affairs, saying to people who are very concerned about the Montfort and so on that, given that the commission is independent, he suggests it's inappropriate for him to intervene directly. I wonder if this is also your view of how the commission should be operating at arm's length from cabinet.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Certainly anyone in Ontario was welcome, during the response period, to respond to the commission's interim directives on any of the restructurings that have taken place to date or any of the interim decisions the commission has made. Anyone in this province is free to make a submission to the commission. The final decisions with respect to hospital restructuring in the province will be taken by the commission and will be done without political interference.

Mr Kennedy: We of course regret that the minister is unable to tell the people of this province clearly. I have another letter here. This letter is from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In it the Minister of Municipal Affairs says very clearly to one of his constituents, "I asked the restructuring commission to extend the deadline for institutions" in his riding "and they have done so." We have a minister of cabinet, who sits around the table when the order-in-council appointments to put members of the commission are made, extending and claiming, bragging to his constituents that he's had influence over its direction.

You can't have it both ways. Which is it? Is the minister of francophone affairs hiding from his responsibilities to act on behalf of francophones in this province or is the Minister of Municipal Affairs interfering with this commission, and is this commission's independence and arm's-length nature damaged? Will you stand up today and ask for the minister's resignation?

Hon Mr Wilson: The question itself should be more appropriately directed to the commission, to Dr Duncan Sinclair, who has —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: Anything I say you will twist in your usual twisted way. The fact of the matter is that Duncan Sinclair will tell you there's no political interference. His credibility is higher than anybody's on that side of the House with respect to health care. He and his commissioners get paid \$1 a year. They have busy lives. They are systems and health experts, people who know a great deal about what the patients of Ontario need, and they're

helping to redesign and restructure our health care system. They're doing that to assist the province, to make sure we have a better health care system with modern hospitals, the latest technologies and the newest drug therapies.

You can ask the commission all you want about its communications with this government. Our communications are made public. Yes, our minister responsible for francophone affairs has made comments to the commission; yes, the women's minister has; and the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'll remind the members that when I stand you must take your seats. The time limits are very strict and they're given equally. I would ask members from both sides that when I'm standing you must take your seats.

Mr Kennedy: The people of Ontario are very disappointed, I'm sure, to know that the Minister of Health doesn't recognize the gravity of the situation. The hospital being closed in my riding, Northwestern, does not have a cabinet minister to advocate on its behalf. Minister, this is your commission. You retain its powers; its integrity rests with your actions. You have a minister, one of your colleagues, who has influence over this commission, expressing this clear statement that he has influenced the outcome of this commission as well.

You can't have it both ways. Are we to believe that this commission is independent? Are we to believe the commission for conflict, which says, "Parliamentary convention prohibits all ministers from personally appearing or advocating on behalf of a private party with any agency, board or commission"? We're sorry you haven't read that and you're not aware of it, but we're very interested in your conduct of your affairs and how you advocate in cabinet for the independence of this commission. Which is it going to be? Does the minister resign or is this commission, which is supposed to be at arm's length from cabinet, compromised, and will you admit that here today?

Hon Mr Wilson: Anyone in Ontario — and I defend this right on behalf of our parliamentary process and our democratic process — has the right to make a submission to this commission. The real shame here is the speaking out of both sides of their mouths on the opposition side of this House. You didn't do anything responsible in this process. You don't really care about these hospitals. You are sitting on the fence with respect to this issue. You made no recommendations at all to the commission. The real shame here is that Liberals and the NDP —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Opposition members, please come to order. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: The question is appropriately addressed to the commission itself. I encourage the honourable member to walk across the street and talk to Dr Duncan Sinclair. He and the chief executive officer, Mark Rochon, and any of the commissioners, have consistently said there is no political interference.

The real shame is the opposition parties didn't participate in the process. They're trying to have it both ways

with respect to hospital restructuring. They go into communities and say, "Yes, we're in favour of getting rid of waste, duplication and that, but don't touch this hospital," depending on what town they're in. Then they go on another TV or media program and say, "Yes, we've in favour of" —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Health. New question.

1400

SEPARATE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, I want to raise with you a very important issue. This morning's paper reported that you said you "could follow Quebec's lead in replacing its religion-based school system if Ottawa allows the required constitutional change," and the direct quote from you is, "It would be something we would consider, obviously, in light of constitutional changes with Quebec."

Minister, you should understand, as Minister of Education in Ontario, that this statement sent shock waves around the province, particularly for the parents of the 600,000 students enrolled in Ontario's separate school system and for the 35,000 teachers employed in that system. I'm going to give you the opportunity now to tell us whether or not you fully support the publicly funded separate school system in Ontario.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity of clarifying the record. Let me be very clear: This government does not intend to seek a constitutional amendment and we have been consistent on that point from the time of forming this government. I did, yesterday, use the term "consider"; you're quite right. Certainly, given the broad interpretation of that term, I regret using it and I have called members of the Catholic community this morning to apologize for whatever concern I might have caused them, however briefly. I have made those calls and will continue to do so today to make sure there is no one concerned or confused about the commitment of this government to the constitutional rights of the Catholic community.

Mr McGuinty: The problem you face, Minister, and I'm sure you well recognize this today, is the problem with respect to your credibility. I think what we had yesterday was another peek into the workings of the mind of John Snobelen. It was another peek we had, not dissimilar to the one we had when this minister said behind closed doors that it was important we first create a crisis in education in Ontario.

There have been some constitutional discussions, both within Quebec and in Newfoundland. I want you to go on record now and ensure Catholics in Ontario that those discussions are academic in so far as you're concerned, and that no matter what goes on in any other province with respect to some new constitutional arrangements, your support to a publicly funded separate school system in Ontario is unwavering and undying to the end.

Hon Mr Snobelen: With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, I believe I've answered that question.

Mr McGuinty: You didn't answer the question, Minister. I'm going to give you another one.

Your government has expressed a fondness from time to time for referenda as an instrument by which you can introduce public opinion into the shaping of public policy, but there again you've got a credibility problem. The change that was instituted in Newfoundland was instigated by way of a referendum. I want to ask you again, on behalf of separate school supporters in Ontario, I want your assurance, that it is not polls and it is not the results of any particular referendum which is going to dictate how you deal with the right enshrined in the Constitution Act, the right recognized by Premier Bill Davis, the right confirmed by courts in Ontario and Canada, that Catholics in Ontario are entitled to a fully publicly funded separate school system, and that no polls and no referenda are going to alter your commitment to that right.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe I've answered this question fully and I believe the assurance I've given to the Catholic community this morning to relieve any concerns they might have had was well received. I also believe the track record of both this government and this minister on this file is consistent and is informative to the whole community, so I have answered this question.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. It follows on from the question of the Leader of the Opposition. The minister talks about his track record. It's not just the statement in this morning's newspaper. Last Friday the minister told the annual conference of the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, "If we have a Catholic education system, let's make sure the system is Catholic."

When you put that statement along with the quote in the newspaper this morning, that "obviously, in light of the constitutional changes with Quebec" this government might consider changes to a linguistic-based system rather than a sectarian-based system, can the minister explain where he is actually at? What do these statements really mean? What is his position and what is the position of the provincial government?

Hon Mr Snobelen: In answer to the question from the member for Algoma, I'll again be as clear as I have been all along on this subject. He can rest assured and other people in Ontario can rest assured that this government is not considering a charter amendment or any other method of eliminating the separate school system in Ontario. We are not.

Mr Wildman: I think I understand what the minister is saying now. He's taking his foot out of his mouth. But could he please explain what he meant on Friday: "If we have a Catholic school system, let's make sure the system is Catholic." Surely that is for the Catholic community to decide in line with the curriculum directives of the Ministry of Education and Training. It's not for the minister to decide whether or not the system is Catholic. What is the minister's view in this regard?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Once again, I believe I've made this position clear today. I've already said, and I'll repeat if it pleases the member for Algoma, that I regret the use of the word "consider" yesterday and that I have in fact

apologized for any concern that might have caused the Catholic community today. I think I've made that very clear now twice in this House and I hope the member for Algoma will accept that.

Mr Wildman: I'm still seeking the minister's clarification on Friday's comment: "If we have a Catholic education system, let's make sure the system is Catholic." Who decides whether it's Catholic enough? Is it the Catholic community? Is it for them to decide how the Catholicity of the system is safeguarded or is it the minister who decides and determines how that is to be decided? Who decides? What is your position? Is the Catholic system Catholic enough and are we to have a Catholic system or a linguistically based system?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I compliment the member for Algoma on the clever twisting of that phrase and the clever use or attempted use of some inference that obviously was not in that statement. I can say this to the member for Algoma, and I think he probably realizes this: In my communications with the Catholic community over the course of the last number of months we've been working together to help make sure that the curriculum that's used in all the publicly funded schools in Ontario results in higher student achievement, results in better curriculum and better materials in the classroom. I think that's the common goal of all people who are involved in education in Ontario and that's certainly my goal and our government's goal.

1410

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the Attorney General. Yesterday my colleague from Welland-Thorold and I were in Windsor and we met with a roomful of families who continue to suffer serious financial hardship because of your closure of the regional offices of the family support plan and because you cut 290 experienced staff.

These were people who used to receive regular support payments before your cuts. Their stories were the same: Their cheques are now late or missing for no reason, because there's been no change in the payor's circumstance, the recipient's circumstance or the employer's circumstance. They cannot get through on the phone lines to the family support plan. If someone is lucky enough to get through, they talk to a different agent every time and have to repeat their story over and over again. The staff do not return phone calls with information they have promised to obtain.

It became clear to us that there has been no positive change whatsoever in the circumstances of these women and children and thousands of others like them. When are you going to admit that your cuts on the backs of these women and children were a terrible mistake?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Quite frankly, right now the family support plan is able to return 50% of all calls that come into it, compared to 6% that once got through under the former government. We are now disbursing in the family support plan 12% more money to women and children than the plan did a year ago. We are now

disbursing \$8 million to \$12 million on average every week. The Ontario plan processes support payments within 24 to 48 hours, and that's 85% of all payments. I think 95% of payments are processed within 24 hours, so we have made significant progress.

I admit that there are still problems with this plan, as those problems existed going back seven or eight years now, but we are continuing to make improvements and to make the plan work better for women and children.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Attorney General, your incompetence and your mismanagement of the FSP has hurt families, it has hurt single parents and it has hurt kids. Kids went without Christmas because of your incompetence. Mortgages have fallen into arrears because of your incompetence. Utility payments have not been made and there have been forced visits to food banks because of your incompetence.

You promised, after you got passage of Bill 82, that it would be proclaimed by January. Bill 103 and Bill 104 were proclaimed on the day they received third reading. You now say, "Some time soon." Your director, though, says, "Not until the fall or winter." Somebody's not telling the truth. Is it you or is it the director?

Hon Mr Harnick: I hope we will be in a position to proclaim this bill very shortly. What we are doing with the family support plan is taking the plan from a plan that had only passive ability to collect money. As a result of that, arrears of \$900 million or more have built up over the years. This plan did nothing more under the NDP government than collect money that was already being collected, and it institutionalized those collections.

This plan has not had any active collection ability. We now will have that. We have 30 new means of doing that among which are driver's licence suspensions, reporting to credit bureaus and the use of the private sector collection agencies to help us collect that money. We hope to be in a position to proclaim this bill and effectively deal with collecting debt that the former government totally ignored and allowed to rise to over \$900 million that women and children in this province have been doing without.

Mr Kormos: You could have proclaimed the bill in January when you promised you would, and you didn't. By April 24 you still haven't proclaimed it. Your director says it may take until the fall or winter. Kids are hurting, families are hurting, single parents are hurting because you've got money in your bank account that belongs to them that you're not prepared to distribute to them. You go one further and you guess that some \$600 million may have to be written off. You're prepared to abandon those families — that's their money — to whom \$600 million is owed, because you want to clean up a mess that you created on the backs of those very same people to whom that money is owed.

You're a shameful Attorney General. Your handling of the FSP has been a horrible display of your incompetence and your disdain for those families and those kids. How can you dare do this to little kids who depended on that plan for the support moneys that their dads and from time to time moms were paying off their paycheque into the trust of you, a trust you betrayed?

Hon Mr Harnick: The only thing that is shameful is the fact that the family support plan under the NDP government had no active means of collecting money. By the time they finished being the government —

Mr Kormos: But you lied, Charlie. You said January and you lied. You lied to these families.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Welland-Thorold, you must —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I think my colleague is right.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, you're going have to withdraw that as well. You must withdraw that statement, member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: We spoke to the moms and the kids and he — I will not retract that. He lied to the families and he lied to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Fine. I name the member for Welland-Thorold, Mr Kormos. Would you please leave the chamber.

Mr Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: The Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: As I was saying, the only thing that's shameful is the fact that under the former government the plan was allowed to accrue debt of about \$900 million, and it's a well-known fact that when you do nothing to collect debt and it gets older and older and older, it becomes more and more difficult to collect.

I can tell you that when MAFIA, Mothers Against Fathers in Arrears, asked this government to implement active ways to collect debt, they were sent away and told that the government wouldn't do it. This former government, the NDP, was prepared to allow debt to escalate to \$900 million without a scintilla of effort to try and collect that debt, and that's what's shameful.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Since the mega-week announcements of January, this government has been negotiating with AMO with respect to the downloading of social housing with respect to the transference of power for social housing. I wonder if you could update the House on those discussions, where those discussions are at, how much the costs are that are going to be associated with it and what actions your government is going to take to ensure that the tenants of public housing in Ontario are protected.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The discussions and meetings with AMO and others are ongoing as we speak. I had a discussion with the chair of AMO just yesterday to discuss these issues. The social housing issue, as I've stated in this House previously, is an issue that has to be negotiated with the Liberal government in Ottawa, the municipalities and the provincial government. Those discussions are ongoing as well, and hopefully we'll be able to resolve something shortly. I doubt that we'll be able to do it before the federal election that's forthcoming, but I expect to have a response that we'll be able to bring to this House, hopefully before the end of this session.

Mr Duncan: Minister, on February 17, in this House, you stated that the city of Ottawa and the region of Peel supported your efforts. We are in possession of letters from both of them.

The city of Ottawa is saying, and this is a letter addressed to you: "I would like to correct a statement you made in the Legislature on February 17, 1997. As reported in Hansard, you stated that the city of Ottawa had asked the province for transfer of housing responsibilities. This is not the case."

The region of Peel: You were quoted as saying that the Peel regional chair, Emil Kolb, supported this. He did a press release saying that Peel has never asked that funding responsibilities for any aspect of social housing be transferred to the municipal level.

When are you going to quit this shell game and come clean with the costs that you're downloading? We estimate and have produced documents from your ministry that say it's in excess of \$800 million and approaching \$1.5 billion, not including any funds for future replacement. When are you going to come clean and tell the tenants of public housing what —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: I can advise the member opposite that the housing authority in Peel asked, and has asked on a number of occasions, to take responsibility for the operation and administration of social housing in Peel, as is the case in Metro and as is the case in Ottawa.

The \$800 million is close to the number that's involved with social housing, but it's part of the switch of responsibilities where municipalities will assume services that they are best equipped to administer and operate in exchange for the \$5-billion-plus that we're taking off education. As we've said repeatedly, we're working with the municipalities to work out this trade. They know we're going in the right direction. We know we're going in the right direction. All of those issues will be worked out in the next matter of weeks or a couple of months.

1420

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. Yesterday we raised with you the issue of a leaked cabinet document from your ministry that points out the government's intention and your ministry's intention to "rationalize" programs in your ministry that fall under the violence against women prevention funding envelope.

The programs in question are programs, as you know, for victims of abuse, vulnerable victims who are women with disabilities, immigrants and visible minorities. You will know that in the GTA alone at least two women have been killed by a spouse in the last month. It's important you understand we're talking about victims' programs, programs that would protect women like the two who have been killed.

The question I have for you, Minister, is simply this: We want to know what "rationalize" means. We think it means you're going to cut, and we want to know how much you are going to cut from the victims' programs for women with disabilities and for victims' programs for

immigrant women and women from racial minority groups. How much are you going to cut from these programs?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): First of all, the document that was referred to yesterday by both the honourable member and the member for Beaches-Woodbine was not a cabinet document. It was an internal document that was intended to be distributed to personnel within my ministry.

Let me assure the member opposite that the rights of vulnerable people are to be protected by this government and we are committed to protecting the rights of all vulnerable people in Ontario.

Mr Silipo: I'm not sure what the minister intends by suggesting the difference between a cabinet submission and an internal ministry document. If it's a document inside the ministry that gives direction to the ministry about how it's going to operate, it's got all the power. In fact, it's even worse because it talks exactly about the same things which we are suggesting, which is that there will be cuts.

Minister, let me just put the issue in a bit of a broader context for you. On January 14, the minister responsible for women's issues said to a coalition of service providers that the funding envelope for violence prevention programs would stay the same. Your own answers and those of your colleagues to order paper questions clearly show us that the funding envelope is being reduced. Your own ministry numbers show that that funding envelope is going to be reduced by some \$200,000, and some \$4 million or \$5 million at least in the overall envelope.

Again, Minister, I would ask you, at least for the part that you are responsible for in your own ministry, come clean with us today and tell us exactly which programs you're going to cut.

Hon Ms Mushinski: I believe I answered the question. This government is committed to protecting the interests of all citizens in Ontario.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): Mr Speaker, in yesterday's Globe and Mail I read about the federal health minister's trip to Toronto. Apparently he was in town to elaborate on —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Who is the question to?

Mrs Munro: The minister responsible for seniors.

Apparently he was in Toronto to elaborate on Paul Martin's promise of money for long-term care. I am wondering, did Mr Dingwall make any contact with you or the Minister of Health or our government to discuss the future needs of seniors in the province?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I would like to inform the House that we have not received any official correspondence from the federal government with respect to the announcements that appeared in the budget. In fact, it would appear that the citizens of Ontario are going to get more information about the budget if they attend the luncheon of the Metro Toronto board of trade.

What I can share with the members of this House, however, is what we learned from that statement from the minister: that much of this money is going to go into a series of conferences in Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

It's no wonder that these details at this point in time are sketchy and unclear, given that the government is about to go into a federal election, when the document that generated its reference in the budget, Canada Health Action, makes a very clear reference in it to implementing the recommendations either through tax increases or premium increases for Ontarians. I anxiously await some clarity from the federal Liberal government as to where, if any, money is coming to Ontario.

Mrs Munro: I recall that during the federal budget in February the government in Ottawa announced only \$50 million a year for all of Canada for a long-term-care pilot project. At the time you stood in the House and told us that Ontario's share of the funding could pay for only about three days' worth of home care. Have you heard anything more from the federal government about what money will flow to Ontario's seniors?

Hon Mr Jackson: I did make some inquiries, and unfortunately, on behalf of the 1.6 million Ontario seniors, we were not able to get any additional information.

We have established that the federal government has shorted every citizen of Ontario about \$2.1 billion. But as it relates to seniors alone, the federal government has walked away and abandoned the New Horizons program, which collectively in Ontario was \$4.7 million worth of programs supporting groups like the councils on aging of Ontario, the Elder Abuse Network, the Family Caregivers Support Network and the Older Persons Network. These agencies have lost all contact with their federal funding. The onus now falls on the provincial government to assist these organizations while the federal government undertakes these conferences in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

The truth is that the government of Mike Harris is reinvesting and increasing funding for services directly to seniors, and that's why we'll increase the home care budget in this province to over \$1.1 billion. That's a \$3-million commitment a day. That's a real investment in the future of seniors —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FINANCING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I'm asking this on behalf of the thousands of unemployed people we have here in Ontario. I'm asking you to end your squabble with the federal government and sign the infrastructure program. Stop holding up the deal because you object to the federal requirement that municipalities have a say in how the infrastructure funding is going to be expended.

None of the other provinces want the 100% control that you want over these funds. Municipalities know what's best as to the types of infrastructure programs they need for their municipalities.

You know we have a serious unemployment problem in this province. As a matter of fact, currently we are

11,000 jobs down from the way we were last August. In the Common Sense Revolution you promised 145,000 jobs annually. So far you're 197,000 jobs behind.

Why are you stalling a \$459-million infrastructure program that will create over 10,000 jobs in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, obviously he has his facts confused. I signed the agreement on April 16. It's the federal government that has refused to sign the agreement. That's point number one.

Point number two: There are over 600 projects awaiting the federal government's approval in Ontario. Each and every single one of those projects originated from a municipality, an educational institution or a hospital. What do you have against providing those jobs and those projects to the people of Ontario?

1430

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, you know full well that you signed a version before all the details were worked out with the federal government and that you signed a version which was totally unacceptable to the government. Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Dufferin-Peel and the Solicitor General, the Attorney General, member for Durham East, order. Order on this side.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): People are waiting in Parry Sound.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: Well —

The Speaker: "Well" nothing. Order.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, you know you signed a version that was totally unacceptable to the federal government. Ontario was the only province proposing not to advertise for applications from municipalities and not to draw from a pool of prior applications. It's completely ridiculous not to allow any involvement by municipalities when they put up one third of the money. You wanted your government and your government alone to decide which projects to put forward. No other province wanted that. Why don't we get Ontario working, sign the agreement so 10,000 people in the province can start working on this?

Hon Mr Eves: To the honourable member, every single one of these projects came from a municipality, an educational institution or a hospital, every single one of them.

I might point out to the honourable member that I wrote Minister Massé a letter on January 8. He wrote back on February 4 totally agreeing with everything I said in my letter and said, "All we have to do are sort out some administrative details." The officials did that. I signed the agreement. He now has refused to sign it because he's getting a little heat from his 98 federal MPs, who want to use this as an election slush fund. That's what this is all about.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today you will know there

was an announcement made in Sudbury of some \$2.4 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund to the cancer treatment program in the north. God knows we all appreciate it, when you consider the savaging that has gone on over the last couple of years to the health care system in the north.

However, to be fair, it raises some questions that need to be answered. Has the policy, have the terms of reference of the heritage board expanded now to include requests from health care facilities, and if this is the case, are these grants to be annualized? Some of this money announced today was for operating. When can we expect some answers to those questions?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It is good news today, the expansion of services in the north. I think the honourable member is in error when he says it's long overdue. We've put more money in the north in the short period of time we've been in government than a lot of other governments did in their entire terms, including making sure emergency rooms throughout the north — that was the first thing we did when we came to office, was put in the \$70 an hour for physicians so they would be on call to keep some 68 emergency rooms in rural and northern Ontario open. I think the second thing I did in office was to announce the new MRI machines, the new magnetic resonance imaging machines, for the north.

With respect to the details of today's announcement, I will get back to the honourable member as to the breakdown of the money that's coming out of the heritage fund and the money that's being shared with the Ministry of Health. I don't have those details right now, but I'd be happy to provide them.

Mr Martin: You've either missed the question or you obviously don't know the answer. The regionalization of health care in the north, while it in some ways makes sense, in other very meaningful ways, however, will create tremendous problems and challenges for families and patients as they travel great distances for treatment.

In Sault Ste Marie, for example, we have a wonderful oncology program that serves our area, Wawa to Blind River. They're stretched to the limit. They've been told by the northern Ontario heritage board that they do not qualify for funding. Can I go home today and tell them to fill in their application because this government is now funding health care out of the northern Ontario heritage fund pot of money?

Hon Mr Wilson: With respect to cancer services, I'm disturbed to hear that the honourable member feels there's a shortage of dollars for cancer services. We've had a dramatic expansion in cancer services, building on the work of your government, and we have money available. The honourable member is going to have to clarify exactly what he means.

We have operating dollars. We're working with the cancer experts in the province. We'll be making some more announcements in the very near future. Cancer is the top priority of this government. We're funding more money in health care today than in the history of this province. The budget is up significantly; we have money.

Where I've run into problems with cancer with respect to the Hamilton area, where they're only running the

machine eight hours a day, we've been able to clear up the entire waiting list by simply suggesting they run the radiation machines one more hour a day, run them between 5 and 6 o'clock, run them past 5 o'clock. We solved a whole pile of problems in the southern part of the province. We'd be happy to look for similar solutions in your part of the province.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a question today for the Attorney General. Last November you announced a blitz initiative to reduce the backlog in the criminal courts in Scarborough. My constituents in Scarborough Centre were pleased with that announcement, and today they continue to have a high level of interest in this very serious issue. People want to know this is being tackled so that there is not a repeat of 1990, when 50,000 cases were dismissed because they were beyond the eight-month deadline to come to trial. People want to know that we are taking action to keep our communities safe. Would you please inform the Legislature of the successes to date in the Scarborough courts?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for an important question. Reducing the backlog is a top priority for me. It has been a long-standing problem and we've finally taken steps to resolve it. We're seeing positive results, particularly in Scarborough, where we have reduced the time it takes for an accused to get to trial from seven months to four months. The number of court appearances that an individual has to make before a case goes to trial has been reduced from seven to eight appearances down to three to four appearances. The number of charges in progress before the courts has now been reduced by 11.2% in Scarborough. These are very concrete results that prove our blitz is working to prevent cases being thrown out because they take too long to come to trial.

Mr Newman: You spoke about the successes, and I'm especially pleased to hear that an accused is now getting a trial within four months, but can you please tell us how these results are being achieved?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I've indicated, we've launched a blitz court in Scarborough as well as the other five most heavily burdened court locations. We have 25 additional crown attorneys, 15 additional clerical people assisting — law clerks — and in Scarborough we set up a separate plea court to enable defence counsel and accused to enter guilty pleas more quickly. This has resulted in quicker resolution of cases.

We set up an additional two courts specifically for the blitz, and in May we'll be opening up another blitz court. We've been working closely with the judiciary and the police to find ways to combat the backlog. The blitz is a first step in addressing this problem.

We are also working very hard to identify long-term solutions to the backlog. By clearing the backlog, we will make sure that our communities stay safe and that victims' rights are strengthened. We're committed to this and we're seeing real, positive results.

1440

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. We just received the Minister of Finance's latest report on the labour market for youth. It shows 31,000 fewer jobs in the first quarter this year over last year. In fact, Minister, you'll acknowledge we have the highest rate of youth unemployment in Canada found right here in Ontario, the highest it's ever been.

Last week you announced with great fanfare your summer student program. You neglected to mention that last year's was a \$59-million program — these are your figures — and this year's program is a mere \$37.5 million. You've cut over \$20 million from the summer student program, this at the time you've raised tuition fees to students upwards of 20% and with the highest levels of youth employment ever. How are students going to pay their tuition come September?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): To the member opposite, yes, we did announce a matter of a few weeks ago the fact that the Ontario summer jobs strategy would be able this year to help additional students; some 34,000 students will be assisted by the program this year, and we'll be able to do that more efficiently and more economically than we have in the past.

We only have to look back a few years ago to the previous government's last, much-heralded summer program for youth, which spent a great deal more money but provided help for only 23,000 youth. We've added more than 10,000 people to the list of folks helped by this program because youth unemployment is a concern of this government. I'm very happy that the programs we introduced last month build on the success record of the last two years.

Mrs Papatello: Minister, let's be clear. You're allowing more students to have jobs, each of them working fewer weeks than ever, some as few as six weeks. You're making a significant cut of \$20 million and the remaining is spread over far more students, some working as few as six weeks. I don't know how students are going to pay that tuition.

As an example, one of the programs you used to have was the Environmental Youth Corps. This was a very successful program. You claim that your subsidy, which is cut from \$2.50 to \$2 an hour, is going to be picked up by the private sector. The Environmental Youth Corps used to do jobs like testing water, soil and air pollution levels. This week your environmental commission damned this government because you have failed on these very controls. Who in the private sector is going to step in and hire the 6,200 young people who worked in the Environmental Youth Corps —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The member opposite, somewhat surprisingly, is wrong on two counts.

First, the programs we announced a matter of a few weeks ago include programs that expand the length of

time a student can work in the summer, and we hope many students are able to take advantage of that.

Second, the member opposite is wrong on the issue of the support of the private sector. In fact, we did have some pilot programs and test programs that offered a partnership and a cooperation with the private sector, producing very real job experience for young people, something they value and something they need. Those programs were successful, so successful that they were oversubscribed. We're building on those successes this year to help more students in Ontario have relevant and meaningful employment over this next summer. It's just one of the initiatives that this government is taking to address the very serious concern of unemployment with youth. We believe it's a serious problem and we believe we're on the road to helping that problem.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Health, following on the question from my colleague from Sault Ste Marie. In light of the announcement today of millions of dollars from the northern Ontario heritage fund for cancer treatment in northeastern Ontario, can the minister clarify the policy for us? Can he explain, even though he approved the 1996-97 operating plan for the Sault area hospitals, which included \$1.1 million needed in renovation capital funding for the Thessalon Hospital, why it was that when they applied to the northern Ontario heritage fund for \$500,000 to assist with that project they were informed by the fund administrators that it didn't qualify, since it was for health care and not economic development?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): As I said to the previous honourable member, I'd be happy to take the question under advisement and I'll report back to the member. I don't have those details right now.

Mr Wildman: I'd appreciate it if the minister would check. I would point out to him that the committee, the Plummer Memorial hospital, which made the application reapplied to the northern Ontario heritage fund a second time, and a second time they were turned down. The criteria for the fund allocation did not allow for funding for hospital renovations and capital expenditures.

You've done it with regard to cancer treatment, which is sorely needed. We also need this in order to implement the plan you approved for the Sault area hospitals. If the money is not going to come from the northern Ontario heritage fund for the Thessalon Hospital, the \$1.1-million renovation charges that are required, where is it going to come from? Is your ministry going to put it up?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, I'd be happy to report back to the honourable member.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Everyone is aware of the enormous human, social and economic costs related to workplace accidents and injuries. I know the minister announced a new vision for the occupational health and safety system last spring. One year later, I'd like to ask the minister if we're starting to see any results.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would simply like to say that we certainly are starting to see some change in the province. Not only are we starting to see a much stronger commitment to health and safety from the individual workplaces, we're also seeing greater self-reliance on behalf of the workplace parties and we're seeing an expansion of concern for health and safety in the communities.

In fact, we have in this province now an organization called the Safe Communities Foundation. Basically it's an organization that is set up by local mayors, councils, service clubs and small businesses. They have initiated in Brockville, they're in Waterloo, they're in Peterborough, and they are working together in order to reduce injury and illness within their businesses. They are striving, I know, in the cities of Brockville and Waterloo to reduce injury and illness by 50% over two years.

Mr Ouellette: The minister points to the growing Safe Communities movement, but community-level action is not enough. I would be interested to know if she sees this same sort of progress in any other area, particularly with our youth, who often go untrained and unprepared into the workforce.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm particularly pleased to indicate to you that we have a new young worker awareness program. We have invested \$415,000, and as a result, we have the centre and we have the IPA visiting schools, either in classrooms or in gymnasium settings. They're teaching young people about their rights, their responsibilities and also their ability to identify hazards in the workplace. We also have a new training program, we have new training standards, and as a result of the new flexibility and the new sector-specific programs, we are seeing hundreds more people registering for programs than ever before.

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. He will recall that on February 5, I sent him a letter outlining the costs that we believe the province is planning to offload on to the municipalities, the extra revenue the province is prepared to give to the municipalities and the costs the province has taken off the municipalities. These numbers were taken heavily from documents from the government but also from talking to municipal leaders. We sent you that information on February 5.

That information, I will say to the people of Ontario, indicates that the province plans to offload roughly \$1 billion of costs on to property tax. We said: "Here are the numbers as we see them. Please tell us if they're not right. Send us back information on it." That was on February 5. Can the minister confirm whether the numbers that were provided are correct, and if he disagrees with them, will he table the numbers he has that refute these numbers?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): As the honourable member is aware, there are several people in Mr Leach's office as well as several other ministers negotiating with AMO and municipalities

about the Who Does What exercise right now. I don't participate in negotiating in public. I think the meetings are progressing quite satisfactorily and I'm sure we will come to an amicable solution with municipalities.

Mr Phillips: This isn't some cosy little deal between lawyers about some land or something like that. For the people of Ontario, we're talking about: Are we going to put seniors' homes on property taxes? Are we going to put child care on property taxes? Are we going to put ambulance services on property taxes? Are we going to put all of our young people who require social assistance on the property taxes?

This isn't some private, confidential piece of backroom negotiations going on between lawyers and business people. This is the public's interest. Speaking on behalf of the public, we said, "What are you up to here?" We provided you with our best estimates. We asked the government months ago, "If you don't agree with these numbers, then you provide the other numbers." I would just say that it is unacceptable to the people of Ontario that this is some cosy little deal done in some back room.

Will the minister undertake today to provide an answer to the question that we asked on February 5? Will he undertake to provide that answer, and when will we get that answer?

Hon Mr Eves: This is no cosy little deal. This is a serious subject that's being talked about between elected representatives at the provincial level and elected representatives at the municipal level representing municipalities all across the province. Quite frankly, I don't think you do those municipalities or those municipal representatives any service by referring to them as some cosy little backroom deal. I'm sure that Mr Mundell would not be happy with your description of him or anybody else who's negotiating on behalf of AMO or municipalities in good faith with the provincial government.

Nothing could serve the youth or the seniors of this province worse than the legacy of debt that you two parties left them with: \$100 billion, spending more money to service the debt than you spent on all the hospitals in the province put together, spending more money per annum to service the debt than on all colleges and universities in the province put together. Those were your priorities for the youth, but they aren't our priorities.

PETITIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVOntario is growing across the province. We've got petitions from everywhere. I'm speaking on a petition delivered to us from the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. The petition reads:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario addressed to Minister Runciman:

"We, the undersigned, believe that helping reduce crime and abuse in our communities is our responsibility as employees of the Ministry of Correctional Services, as professionals in related fields and as concerned citizens;

"Closing institutions which provide specialized services to women and treatment to men does not achieve that goal;

"Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is often transmitted from one generation to the next, with tremendous cost to society;

"Treatment aimed at breaking that cycle must include the abuser so that another generation of children is not raised with the same destructive lessons;

"As Mr Ross Virgo stated, 'The Ontario Correctional Institute is a therapeutic community known around the world for their techniques';

"Research statistics support anecdotal evidence that we are effective in changing abusive behaviour;

"A therapeutic community cannot exist in a super-prison;

"Save victims and money by keeping what works open."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bob Wood (London South): On behalf of the member for London North, I would like to present a petition in relation to hospital restructuring.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to remove rent controls; and

"Whereas the removal of rent control legislation breaks a campaign promise made by the Conservatives during the election; and

"Whereas a great number of tenants are seniors and people on fixed incomes and may have had their income cut by 22% due to social assistance cuts and cannot afford increases in their rent; and

"Whereas growing unemployment and the scarcity of affordable housing in Metro makes the removal of rent control an even greater disaster for tenants and for people who cannot afford to buy homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario keep their pre-election promise and not remove rent controls, and continue with the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Rental Housing Protection Act."

I affix my name to this excellent petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I'd like to present a petition on behalf of some of the constituents of my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government of the province of Ontario."

I will affix my name to the top.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that is contained on about 500 cards. It's addressed as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario and to the Honourable Michael D. Harris, Premier of Ontario:

"The citizens of Ontario and your Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation agree that this province has one of the great library systems in the world. This system has been built by citizens like me in every Ontario community serving on local library boards, with the decision-making power to promote, protect and create libraries that respond to our own communities;

"I request that you guarantee in your new legislation citizen-majority library boards and free access to all library information resources, the foundation of lifelong education."

It's signed by people such as Mrs Place of Worthington Way, Kingston; Jeanette Knox of Theresa Crescent, Kingston; Doris Kilpatrick of Third Avenue, Kingston; and about 1,000 other residents.

CASINOS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I have today a petition pertaining to the establishment of casinos in the city of Guelph. It's been signed by about 159 residents of the city. It appears to be in standard form, and I am submitting it on their behalf today.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas summer employment is a necessity to many students to help finance their post-secondary education; and

"Whereas obtaining summer employment may mean the difference between students returning or not returning to school; and

"Whereas summer employment provides work experience necessary for students to compete in the job market after leaving school; and

"Whereas summer employment is a means through which students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can compete with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds for education; and

"Whereas summer employment is more productive for students than unemployment; and

"Whereas after threat of elimination, Ontario student jobs programs were drastically scaled down last year;

"We, the people undersigned, demand the Ontario government continue all existing Ontario student jobs programs and invest in expanding and establishing new student and youth employment programs."

After today's response from the minister, I too sign this petition.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have two petitions here, signed by thousands of residents of communities all over Ontario in opposition to this government's agenda for education, in particular Bill 104. I support it and I've signed it.

1500

HOUSING COOPERATIVES

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition I'd like to present on behalf of the member for St George-St David. It relates to public housing. I'll just read the operative clause:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Ontario government sit down with the co-op housing sector to negotiate a deal which will ensure the long-term financial viability of housing co-ops and the continuance of rent-geared-to-income assistance, upon which thousands of co-op members depend, and which will promote greater responsibility for administration by the co-op housing sector and less interference by the government in the day-to-day operation of housing co-ops."

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas non-instructional staff of boards of education provide an important and essential service to schools in Ontario;

"Whereas the school system functions best, in the interest of its students, when all of its employees work in

harmony and coordination and with the kind of expertise that comes with continuity, coordination and experience;

"Whereas Bill 104 encourages the privatization and outsourcing of non-instructional positions and the resulting loss of jobs, cutting of wages and salaries, and removal of employment benefits for people with comparatively moderate incomes;

"Whereas dedicated educational employees are having their lives severely disrupted so that the Harris government can finance an income tax that benefits the wealthiest people the most;

"We, the undersigned, request that Bill 104 be withdrawn and any future legislation not call for the outsourcing and privatization of educational jobs."

I affix my signature, because I'm in full agreement with this petition.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of Tim Calhoun, one of my constituents:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that undermines the work of my local firefighters and jeopardizes fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I'm pleased to present this.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I've got a petition here from many seniors in my riding on Kirknewton and McRoberts and —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't want to know the names. I just want to know what the petition says.

Mr Colle: "Seniors against prescription user fees;

"Whereas the government of Michael Harris has broken another pre-election promise not to impose user fees on health care;

"Whereas the user fee imposed by the Harris government on prescription drugs is causing low-income seniors grave hardship;

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors have worked very hard and paid taxes for decades;

"Whereas seniors are most concerned that this will be the beginning of more and more user fees on health care;

"We, the undersigned, totally oppose the Mike Harris prescription user fees for seniors and petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Mike Harris government place a moratorium on all health care user fees for seniors."

I join the seniors in my riding and I'll affix my name to this fine petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): Rather than read the whole petition, in accordance with the standing orders I'll just summarize it. These petitions

outline the matters regarding the spring bear hunt that are offensive to these people and petition the Ontario government to end the spring bear hunt. It's signed by approximately 290 of my constituents and other persons from around Ontario. I understand, Mr Speaker, that you're quite familiar with the petitions to end the spring bear hunt, so I'll submit it today.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition regarding protecting educational services in Ontario that reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government is proposing detrimental changes to educational services in Ontario; and

"Whereas the government's obsession with the fiscal bottom line will result in reductions in the quality of education services for our children; and

"Whereas inclusive and open consultation on education reform has not taken place;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reconsider its direction in terms of education policy and that they halt any further changes to the education system until a thorough and inclusive review has taken place."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from the Ottawa area, Nepean, Gloucester, Belleville, all through that area of our province, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work, and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to theirs.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I have a petition pertaining to health care funding signed by approximately 30 of my constituents from Stouffville, Keswick and

Sutton. It appears to be in the standard form, and I'm submitting it on their behalf today.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that's submitted by Mrs Sharon Strickland of 5 Carruthers Avenue in Kingston, and it states as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy,

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to it and have filed it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my name to theirs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I beg leave to present the 36th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Does the Chair wish to make a brief statement? No?

Pursuant to standing order 104(g)(11), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKERS' COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996

PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA LOI SUR LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mrs Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other acts / Projet de loi 99, Loi assurant la stabilité financière du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs blessés, favorisant la prévention des lésions et des maladies dans les lieux de travail en Ontario et révisant la Loi sur les accidents du travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Today I am very pleased to move second reading of Bill 99, the Workers' Compensation Reform Act, 1996. With this act we are completing the final phase of the complete overhaul the workers' compensation system. This act reflects the needs of the modern workplace as we move towards the 21st century.

The legislation that we are putting before the House today will create a viable workplace safety and insurance organization. It will be legislation that is able to deliver fair and generous benefits at a cost competitive with other jurisdictions in North America. It will lead to a fully funded system that is not only sensitive to the needs of injured workers but sustainable by the employers who fund the system and provide the jobs.

The Workers' Compensation Act was introduced 82 years ago. Since that time the act has been amended on numerous occasions and, as a result, today it is a confusing patchwork that bears little relation to the changing nature of work or the changing nature of workplace injury and illness.

Certainly, as labour critic from 1990 to 1995, I observed the problems at the board. The most significant problem facing the board then and now is the issue of the huge unfunded liability. It was projected to reach over \$18 billion by the year 2014 if no action was taken. Today, the unfunded liability stands at \$10.4 billion. This figure is three times greater than the unfunded liabilities

of all of the other provinces combined. If you take a look at the size of the unfunded liability in another way, you will see that each employer, when he or she hires a new employee, becomes accountable for more than \$4,000 of the unfunded liability. Clearly, this \$10.4-billion unfunded liability is a hindrance to job creation in Ontario.

High assessment rates are another problem, and unfortunately they negatively affect Ontario's competitiveness. At \$3 per \$100 of payroll, our rates were the second highest in Canada, next only to Newfoundland's. Unfortunately again, this high payroll tax was not and is not conducive to job creation in this province.

Another problem with the WCB was the fact that the system was not focusing on prevention and injury and, as a result, it was totally focused on providing compensation. Furthermore, when we did have injury and illness occurring in the workplace the system did a very poor job of effecting a safe and timely return to work, and each year we continue to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on vocational rehabilitation and other such programs, with little or nothing to show for it.

Finally, for any of us who have dealt with the WCB, whether we are employers or employees, whether we are injured workers or MPPs who try to access the board on behalf of our constituents, we know that in the past customer service has been poor and it has lacked coordination. Clearly, the board and its agencies are in need of reform in this area as well. We must provide good service for injured workers and for all other stakeholders who go to the board.

These problems were present when this government assumed office in June 1995. Recognizing the need for change, we took immediate action to reform the system. We disbanded the royal commission. We announced that the Workplace Health and Safety Agency would be integrated into the WCB as part of our plan to develop a coordinated vision and strategy for the WCB. This meant that the board assumed responsibility for promotion, training, certification and employer accreditation.

We also quickly passed Bill 15, which replaced the bipartite board of directors with the multi-stakeholder model which introduced annual value-for-money audits and strengthened the board's ability to deal with fraud and revenue loss, losses that amounted to approximately \$164 million last year. Of course when we talk about fraud, I think it's important to point out that we're talking about three different types of fraud: We're talking about employer, employee and supplier fraud. That's what was costing us the approximately \$164 million last year.

Most important, with Bill 15 we started the move towards making the WCB responsible for health and safety by clearly pointing that out in the purpose clause. For the first time, there was an obligation placed on the board to focus on health and safety.

Since that time we have appointed an experienced and capable board of directors under a new chair and we have brought in a new CEO. They ensured that, as of January 1 of this year, our commitment to reduce the average assessment rates by 5% was fulfilled. That reduces the average assessment rate in this province to \$2.85 and that is the lowest assessment rate we have seen in 10 years.

The board has also approved a plan to move all rate groups to their targets and they have announced a new organizational structure that, for the first time, places an emphasis on workplace safety. The board has also begun to improve customer service and it has established an experience rating program for small businesses that are participating in the Safe Communities program. At present we have three communities in Ontario that are participating in the Safe Communities program — Brockville, Waterloo and Peterborough — and we know there are 10 other communities that are anxious to get involved and reduce the incidence of injury and illness in their communities and within their businesses.

Finally, after extensive consultations, the member for Burlington South last summer delivered a report on the WCB's future.

This, then, is a very brief summary of the actions that we have already taken to reform our workers' compensation system. I now want to turn to the substance of Bill 99.

The reforms in the bill are based on five principles:

First, restoring the financial viability of the system by retiring the unfunded liability by the year 2014;

Secondly, we want to refocus the system as an insurance plan for workplace injury and illness;

Third, we want to focus on the prevention of injury and illness in the workplace, first and foremost;

Fourth, the safe and timely return to work when injury or illness does occur; and

Fifth, we must encourage the workplace parties to be more self-reliant.

1520

I would now like to explore these five principles more fully, beginning with the restoration of the financial viability of the system. As I have indicated, our reforms will enable us to meet the target of retiring the unfunded liability by the year 2014. This is a goal which other workers' compensation boards throughout Canada have set for themselves. In fact, they are far ahead in that regard and we will simply be one of the last to accomplish that goal.

We are going to accomplish that goal in a number of ways. We are going to keep our commitment to adjust benefit levels, as other provinces have done, from the current 90% of pre-injury net earnings to 85%. Similar adjustments have already been made in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. However, our adjustment is certainly more fair in many respects, since in some other jurisdictions it has been reduced to 75% and 80%. Ours are certainly among the most generous in Canada today.

However, I want to just remind everyone that those individuals who were injured prior to the bill coming into force — and probably that now will not be until January 1, 1998 — will continue to receive the benefits at the current 90% level. Workers injured before 1990 who receive lifetime pensions will keep those pensions. They will also keep the \$200 top-up introduced by the previous government.

Second, inflation protection for all but the most vulnerable workers will be adjusted. This was begun by the previous government. In fact, the NDP plan was projected to save \$18.1 billion by the year 2014. How-

ever, again I want to remind everyone that this adjustment will not affect the 100% disabled or the survivors of deceased injured workers.

Third, the proposed reforms will ensure that workers injured on the job receive benefits that are consistent with the loss of income they actually experience because of their injury. As a result of the changes, the board will be required to establish the existence of a permanent impairment before it can award a benefit for future loss of earnings due to the injury. Under the bill, the board would have greater flexibility in reviewing earning loss benefits during the first six years after the injury to make sure that the benefits reflect actual lost income. The changes also give the board the flexibility to take into account the patterns of a worker's earnings in calculating the basis for determining benefits payable.

To restore financial viability, we have balanced the legislation and we have also taken a look at the revenue side and we have made the appropriate changes. Under our legislation, employers will pay their fair share of the costs of the system. For example, to recover unpaid WCB debts from employers who close their operation or who leave the province, the WCB, when the act is introduced, will be able to levy assessments against employers as security. The board will also be able to hold a purchaser liable for the debts of the previous employer. This change is targeted at those employers who reorganize their businesses to avoid outstanding WCB debts.

These are but two of the measures we are proposing to stop revenue leakage. They ensure that the honest employers in this province do not continue to subsidize those who are not paying their fair share.

Second principle: the refocusing of the system. We want to restore the system to its original mandate as a workplace accident insurance plan. Bill 99 addresses the fact that in recent years the system has moved beyond its original mandate. In the past number of years, compensation has been paid for conditions whose connection to the workplace is often difficult to determine. Chronic mental stress is an obvious example. That is why compensation will be provided for stress, in the future, when the bill is passed, when it results from a traumatic workplace incident. Similarly, compensation for chronic pain will be limited to the normal healing time, which will be detailed in a forthcoming regulation.

The problem extends beyond benefits. The system as a whole has become too large, too complicated and too cumbersome. There are five agencies related to workers' compensation, including the Occupational Disease Panel, the offices of the worker and employer advisers, WCAT and the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. As I indicated to you, the agency has already been disbanded and its activities integrated into the WCB. We are going to be restructuring and refocusing these agencies in order that we can provide more efficient and effective service to the stakeholders.

Third, the principle of our reforms is the prevention of workplace injury and illness. Certainly, for me that is the most important principle. Our goal is to make Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world. In order to do that, we need to promote and raise public awareness of the need to prevent injury and illness in the workplace.

Bill 99 formalizes and expands the board's injury and illness and health and safety mandate and it gives the board a pivotal role in Ontario's health and safety support system. From now on, the first and foremost function of the board will be not on compensation but on the prevention of illness and injury.

As part of this new focus, the board will act as the focal point for Ontario's network of health and safety partners. These include the safe workplace associations, which are all being restructured, they include the occupational health and safety clinics, they include the labour unions, the employer groups, the professional associations, community organizations, educational institutions and other government departments. The board will work to ensure that all our health and safety partners share a common vision and a coordinated strategy to reduce injury and illness in Ontario's workplaces.

Not only will they coordinate activities, the board will provide incentives to invest in health and safety. We are already seeing this in the Safe Communities program, where the board will be providing rebates to businesses that collectively reduce workplace injury and illness through the safe communities program.

To emphasize the board's new focus on health and safety and its mandate as a workplace accident insurance plan, the name of the board is being changed to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The fourth principle of our reforms is the record of return to work. We must improve our return-to-work record. Last year we spent over \$400 million on various return-to-work programs. Unfortunately, the results have been very poor. Fewer than 60% of the workers on compensation were able to return to work in less than a year, and of those who did return, many were subsequently reinjured. Bill 99, on the other hand, introduces a new return-to-work strategy that will require that the workplace parties work cooperatively in a self-reliant manner. We believe that the workplace parties are in the best position to take these steps and focus not only on return to work but on prevention.

1530

In the new process we're setting up, we would propose the following steps to ensure a safe and timely return to work: The employer and employee must contact each other as soon as possible after an injury and they must maintain contact; an attempt must be made to arrange employment at the pre-injury level of earnings that is consistent with the injured worker's functional abilities; and the workplace parties must cooperate in return-to-work measures that are required and set down by the board.

Collectively, these requirements will serve to maintain the very critical workplace connection in the important early stages of the disability, a workplace connection that we know at the present time is often not maintained.

If, after following the above steps, an injured worker is still unable to return to work with the pre-injury employer, the second phase of the return-to-work strategy occurs. At this point, the board conducts an assessment to determine whether a labour market re-entry plan is advisable. A labour market re-entry plan is a program designed to reintegrate an injured worker into the

workforce at a level of earnings that approximates his or her pre-injury situation. The plan will be developed by the board, the injured worker and, where appropriate, the employer and the attending health professional.

But the return-to-work process requires more than cooperation; it will require information on which to base sound decisions. It is important that both the injured worker and the employer have access to relevant, up-to-date information about the worker's functional abilities. That is why an injured worker will be required to consent to the release of functional abilities information to the employer as part of their application for benefits.

I'd like to point out that functional abilities information is not — and I stress not — confidential medical information. It will simply describe what is needed to help the injured worker get back into the workplace; that is, it will describe what a worker can or cannot do. A one-page form is presently being developed by the WCB in consultation with health professionals and other stakeholders, and it will soon be released for public comment.

Finally, the fifth principle is increased self-reliance. As I've indicated, this bill recognizes that workplace parties are in the best position to not only prevent workplace illness and injury, they are also in the best position to manage the consequences of injury and illness when they occur. Our changes will encourage employers and employees to assume more responsibility. For example, in the return-to-work process, in the future the board will assume a guiding and facilitating role. It will monitor, it will mediate and it will resolve disputes where necessary. To ensure compliance, the new act specifies that a failure to cooperate in the return-to-work or labour market re-entry process will result in penalties for either of the workplace parties, as the case may be.

These are the key themes underlying Bill 99. This bill represents a balanced approach to reform. As I said at the outset, it is not only sensitive to the needs of injured workers but is sustainable by the employers, who fund the system and create the jobs. We will have in this province an insurance plan for workplace injury and illness that operates on sound business principles and continues to deliver among the most generous benefits in North America at a cost that is among the most competitive.

The new Workplace Safety and Insurance Board will focus on the prevention of injury and illness first and foremost, return to work when that is possible, labour market re-entry services when needed, and compensation as required. With this new focus on health and safety, our workers' compensation system will be able to reduce illness and injury in the workplace. It will make our workplaces safer. It will make them more productive and more competitive. As a result, there will be recognition that our workplaces in this province are safe, and it will lead to more investment and job creation.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to participate in today's debate, and I certainly look forward to receiving further input when we have the public hearings during the summer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Floyd Laughren): It's time for responses.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I know that many of the injured workers and those who might be

injured in the future are not going to welcome many of the provisions found in this piece of legislation introduced by the minister this afternoon. In fact, on Monday afternoon the St Catharines and District Labour Council will be holding a ceremony in regard to the national day of mourning in Merritt Park on St Paul Street in St Catharines. The ceremony will rededicate the monument to workers who have been killed or injured on the job.

The ceremony is going to be held at 4:30 pm on Monday, April 28, 1997. Unfortunately, those of us who have to be in the assembly will be unable to be in attendance, but certainly our sympathy and words of condolences will be with those who are gathered together. The keynote speaker on that occasion will be the CAW's national health and safety coordinator, Cathy Walker. There will also be a ceremony at 6 pm in Niagara Falls to unveil a new monument. They will be going to the monument site in Niagara Falls shortly after the ceremony in St Catharines.

I mention this because the individuals who will be attending this ceremony are most familiar with the damage which has been done over the years through workplace accidents that have happened. Everyone strives to make sure these do not happen. In fact, no one wants to have to file a claim with the WCB, neither employers nor employees.

There is a concern among many of the people who will be at this ceremony that some people may be rushed back into the workforce and suffer a recurrence as a result, meaning that person is going to be detrimentally affected and, of course, consequently the employer will be as well.

No one is quarrelling with the fact that there have to be some efficiencies in the operations of the Workers' Compensation Board, but we feel there are many provisions in this bill which will not accomplish that which we are seeking.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): The minister said at the conclusion of her remarks that she was honoured to make this presentation and to present this bill. I would say to the minister that she ought to hang her head in shame for introducing this bill and for what it does to injured workers, just like the rest of your anti-worker agenda that's now there for us to look at, that puts the lie to the argument you make that this is going to be better for workers.

I find it interesting that two of my Tory colleagues are laughing at this point, the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Wentworth East. We'll see how much you two are laughing when the thousands of injured workers and other workers across our community of Hamilton-Wentworth come to you and ask you how you defend this attack on injured workers. We'll see how proud and honoured you feel to respond to those workers as they turn out, and I guarantee you they will turn out.

This minister talks about the fact that this is all about dealing with a fiscal crisis and putting the fiscal house in order. Just like your 30% tax cut, where you say the debt and deficit is the priority, how do you justify taking \$6 billion out of the pockets of injured workers and giving it back to employers who owe that unfunded liability in the first place? How do you square that with the fact that you're gutting the rights of injured workers in this plan?

That's what this is all about: taking \$6 billion and putting it back in the pockets of the people who (a) owe that money in the first place and (b) have no further need of breaks because you've already given them all the breaks they should ever hope for from any government.

You talk about fairness, Minister. When we get a chance to go into this bill, you and your colleagues had better be ready to explain why, if you think fairness is so important, you took fairness out of the purpose clause. It no longer says "fair compensation"; it just says "compensation." You don't care about fairness; you care about taking care of your friends. These hearings will prove it.

1540
Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I am pleased to reply to the Minister of Labour's presentation this afternoon. I would say to the member for Hamilton Centre that we appreciate your histrionics, but it would be nice if you would extend the same polite courtesy to the Minister of Labour that she always extends to you at all times.

In terms of response to the minister's speech, I would say for my part the primary goals of this legislation appear to be making the workplaces of Ontario safer and putting our injured workers' compensation system on a stronger financial footing so as to ensure that in the future there is money available to fairly compensate injured workers. Third, I would say this bill will encourage job creation, encourage employers to hire, and we certainly need new jobs in Ontario.

I would like to also compliment the Minister of Labour on her detailed and comprehensive explanation of the rationale for the bill. I think all reasonable people who will hear her explanation will be very satisfied with the effect this bill will have. I look forward to the debate that will take place in this House and perhaps to participating in the hearings, who knows?

I would also like to compliment the minister on the fine work she does as Minister of Labour, as well as her involvement in all the government's legislation at the cabinet level, and certainly her work as the member for Waterloo North. Her constituents are indeed very, very fortunate to have her here, as are all the citizens of Ontario.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I just hope there are extensive public hearings throughout the summer on Bill 99. I think it's critical that there be input right across the province because this is going to affect workers, ordinary people right across the province, in every city.

I know this government has spent a lot of time and a lot of legislation almost scapegoating workers, scapegoating ordinary people, and helping to reward their rich friends with tax cuts etc.

I guess the most difficult thing to accept about this bill is that again the most vulnerable people, injured workers, people who through no fault of their own have been injured in the workplace, will be cut. Their benefits will be cut. Will their rents be cut? Will the cost of food and the cost of clothing be cut? Will these costs be cut? No. But now their benefits will be cut. It's another attempt to download on to those who can't afford it, another hit from this government which just cares about pleasing their rich friends.

The minister is going to have to convince the workers across this province that she isn't just listening to the backroom whiz kids, the backroom tiny Tories who are trying to manipulate this province at the expense of ordinary people. That is what we're looking for. We're looking for the minister to explain why she's cutting these workers who have been injured. That is what the people of Ontario are saying. They're saying to the minister: "How can you justify cutting us who have been injured? The minister and her friends in the cabinet may be well off. They don't care, but we care what's happening to our little, meagre pension."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Waterloo North has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd just like to briefly indicate to you that I was pleased that in the city of Hamilton and in Windsor there were two editorials which indicated and supported the need to overhaul the WCB. In fact, the editorial in the Hamilton Spectator says: "There will be some loss of benefits for injured workers, although the size of the reductions is not as brutal as made out by opposition critics. Benefit levels will be cut from 90% to 85% of a worker's net pay, consistent with trends in other provinces such as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick."

I'd just like to indicate as well that the Windsor Star indicates: "Clearly the time has come for change, and clearly the system is dysfunctional. Both the NDP and Liberals, under different circumstances and regimes, were eager to point out the many failings of the WCB."

It indicates here: "If the WCB were a model of efficiency, the hue and cry against these proposals would make sense. But the millions misspent on rehabilitation programs, buildings and administrators is well documented, and the WCB has been sharply criticized for years."

Then I think this is the most telling: "That suggests people are more interested in protesting than participating in the overhaul of an antiquated system. We believe that's counterproductive to everyone."

As I simply want to indicate one more time, it has long been known by governments of all political stripes that the WCB is in trouble. We know it has not served injured workers well. It's not serving employees and employers well. What we are endeavouring to do here is to ensure that there is a system in place which will provide fair and generous benefits for injured workers not only today but into the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could ask for all-party consent to share the time with the member for Oakwood.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to share the time? It is agreed.

Mr Patten: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I listened very intently to the minister's speech today. I look forward to reviewing it in hard copy and reviewing some of the comments she made.

This is a very important bill. It's a bill that has been in the works for a lot of time, and I know the minister herself would have been anxious to bring it forward even earlier than this particular date.

I want you to know I'm particularly pleased to take part and to participate in this debate today because I

believe there are many concerns and many issues that are of particular importance to those who are in great need. I see the dismantling of some of the key supports for some people in Ontario society, and the consequence of offloading on to other systems and ultimately on the people we have pledged to support in illness or in injury or, unfortunately, in death.

I'd like to briefly take a historic perspective of the principles of the WCB, because I think it's always worth looking at where we have come for a system that has been there for many years — over 80 years in fact.

Workers' compensation was founded on the premise of justice and humanity. The system was based on four principles. One was no-fault, which was compensation payable regardless of who was at fault. Second was the duration of disability: compensation payable for as long as the worker's disability lasted. No injured worker should need to rely on welfare or on charity in order to be able to survive. The third principle was independent administration — I reiterate that, independent administration — managed by a board accountable to the government and independent from employers. Of course the fourth principle was that it would be employer-funded. All costs would be paid by employers, because naturally they profit from the work and are protected from lawsuits, and no contributions from workers or taxpayers.

The WCB's motto was "Justice speedily and humanly rendered." We may see things happening more speedily with this legislation, but will it be justly, fairly and humanly rendered?

There's no question that the nature of work today has changed. With automation and globalization, it's a very different workplace in many respects than it was 80 years ago. We are seeing a dramatic shift from an old to a new paradigm, but to our Liberal way of thinking, justice and humanity remain timeless and are universal principles.

I want to tell you what we do not believe. We do not believe that benefits and indexation cuts from injured workers and pensioners are consistent with justice and humanity. We do not support reducing the purchasing power of workers with long-term disabilities. We do not support the mandatory release of confidential medical information to employers without first seeing the form. We do not support removing chronic occupational stress claims from the jurisdiction of the board and restricting eligibility for mental stress. We're anxious to see the regulations dealing with chronic pain and particularly its definition.

We also do not support across-the-board premium reductions to employers, which took effect January 1, 1997. Although not part of Bill 99, parenthetically, a Liberal government would not have done so. We recommended freezing premiums paid by employers. We are not convinced that the financial situation of the WCB is as serious as the minister and the former minister responsible for the WCB claim it to be.

1550

As a responsible opposition, I want to highlight what we do support. We do support the concept of timely return to work for injured workers, since this benefits everyone, the employers, the employees, the community as a whole. We do support reducing the unfunded

liability of the board but not on the backs of injured workers without other concomitant initiatives on the revenue side such as seriously addressing the unpaid and uncollected premiums. The minister says that she will introduce some measures that will improve the capacity to go after those unpaid premiums, and of course there are hundreds of them, if not thousands, out there. We'll be looking forward to this and we'll be hearing from groups in that particular regard.

The minister has stated on numerous occasions that the government's goal is to make Ontario's workplaces among the safest in the world, and of course, who would disagree with that? It's a laudable goal and we support this goal. However, we are sceptical that perhaps around the corner is a hidden agenda. It would appear that if certain provisions in Bill 99 are not changed, injured workers and pensioners, one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, as we all know, will be paying the lion's share of the WCB contributions towards a tax cut which, as we all know, benefits the most wealthy and the richest in our society.

We make this assertion because the Common Sense Revolution promised, "WCB premiums will be cut by 5%." The reduction of premiums for employers was indeed announced January 1 of this year, which amounts to, as was said by my colleague from Hamilton Centre, in the neighbourhood of \$6 million.

Mr Colle: Billion.

Mr Patten: Billion dollars. I'm sorry.

Dealing with the title change, we understand that replacing the title of the Workers' Compensation Board with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is estimated to cost \$1 million. Is this really necessary? We think this is another example of an unnecessary initiative where that money could have been resources that could better be spent in support of an effective system.

We understand that it is to reflect a new integrated focus on accident prevention, health and safety promotion, workplace accident insurance and compensation. I quote, "This legislation has as its number one priority the prevention of illness and injury in the workplace." This is, according to the minister, a quote from Hansard.

With regard to the folding in of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, while we supported this initiative in our particular campaign, we were curious as to why the minister would choose at this time to fold the functions of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency into the WCB, since this agency was established under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the act itself is currently the subject of a review. It seems to me this is putting the cart before the horse, that it should have been reviewed first.

The minister stated on February 6, 1997, at the release of the discussion paper on the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which includes plans for province-wide consultations, "A modernized Occupational Health and Safety Act will help us achieve our goal of making Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world." The minister also stated, "This legislation has as its number one priority the prevention of illness and injury in the workplace."

Why then is the minister so anxious to get through second reading of this particular bill and to have it come into law? We know of course that the date originally was July 1. Because of other legislation, all the mega-week bills, this one was sidelined. The new date, we understand, is January 1, 1998. But the timetable for the review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, with the extensive consultations, will be concluding in early May, and it seems to me that we have time to listen to what is happening. But no, the government is moving on this change regardless, so that renders that particular process somewhat moribund.

It would appear then that the termination of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency established under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the transfer of its functions is a done deal, and therefore it's going ahead anyway. So why go through the charade of having consultations?

Further, we do not believe that part II of the act, "Injury and Disease Prevention," has enough teeth in it to accomplish the primary goal of accident and injury prevention.

Dealing with part I, "Interpretation," the purpose of the act, I note that when the minister introduced the bill at first reading she described the bill as, "An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease on Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other acts."

But the emphasis at that time seemed to be, and I believe it to be, on the financial side of things. Financial stability is what the minister says, yet the responsibility for dealing with the financial stability does not appear to be a two-way street. In fact it appears to be a one-way street, with injured workers and pensioners paying for it and some employers getting the breaks. This despite the fact that the ministry acknowledges that the number of accidents and the rate of injuries over the past several years in fact has declined.

I note in the interpretation section of the bill, the purpose of the act is "to accomplish the following in a financially responsible and accountable manner." Accountable to whom, we may ask?

"1. To promote health and safety in workplaces and to prevent and reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and occupational diseases.

"2. To facilitate the return to work and recovery of workers who sustain personal injury arising out of and in the course of employment or who suffer from an occupational disease.

"3. To provide compensation and other benefits to those workers and to the spouses and dependants of deceased workers.

"4. To facilitate the re-entry into the labour market of spouses of deceased workers where appropriate."

We support these stated purposes of the act, but we're concerned that the real priority is to deal with the unfunded liability, and it is our opinion that the need to eliminate the \$10.9-billion unfunded liability has been highly exaggerated. We do not believe that the financial viability of the WCB is seriously at stake. Furthermore,

the unfunded liability is not a debt. We do not believe that "without intervention in the system," as say the minister and the Jackson report, "the unfunded liability is likely to increase to over \$14 billion by the year 2014." We question that.

The 1995 WCB year-end showed an operating surplus of \$510 million, but this government dismisses the positive 1995 financial results "as not indicative of emerging new trends that on their own would independently turn around the WCB," as says the Jackson report.

We realize that the government's goal is to have a fully funded system at or before the year 2014 to bring, as they say, fiscal sanity to the board's operations. Obviously we support the reduction of the unfunded liability, but it should not be borne by injured workers and pensioners alone through benefit and entitlement cuts, while giving employers an across-the-board 5% reduction to their premiums. As stated above, a Liberal government would have frozen premiums.

We support measures that make fair adjustments to the revenue side. These include measures to improve unpaid and uncollected premiums. I'll be anxious to see the details of the minister's comments today in that particular area and just how they're going to go about doing that, and to see if there is diligence in going after unpaid premiums, as they are so diligent in examining and looking for welfare fraud. We all agree that to cut down on fraud at all levels is important. One thing we could do to cut down on some costs is forget about the title change. Everybody uses it, everybody knows what it is and everybody understands it.

1600

We also support a rationalization of the target assessment rates for employers so that small businesses in particular are not penalized by rates that are so high they are forced out of business or threatened with closures. We agree with that.

Turning to the workers' entitlements to benefit: We agree that workers should file their claims for benefits under the insurance plan as soon as possible after their injury, but we're concerned about the new requirement for workers to file their claims within six months except, I'm told, in cases of occupational disease, presumably because of the usually long latency period between the time of initial exposure and the onset of disease. We'll be anxious to hear what employers and employees have to say on this issue during the public consultations. I'm sure we'll hear some interesting stories.

We're particularly perturbed by the downloading of costs on to the injured workers currently receiving pensions — I didn't catch totally what the minister said in her speech but she implied that those prior to 1998 would not be affected by the loss of their pensions to any degree; if that's the case, then I'm at least pleased at that — and workers who will receive pensions by reducing annual increases to less than half the increase in the consumer price index.

That's one formula. There are a variety of formulas that are being proposed here that we'll have to take a close look at and see how it comes out and who benefits and how it benefits the injured workers who, of course, this agency and this board is designed to help.

Injured workers are now only receiving 90% of their previous net income. The rationale for cutting the compensation to injured workers to 85% of net average earnings from the current 90% is, and I quote this from Cam Jackson, "the principle that no worker should earn more on compensation than from work." I would like to ask: How is 85% of a particular sum, in this case of net salary, more than work which would yield 100% of net salary?

The assumption is that injured workers will always prefer compensation over a return to work, and this is ludicrous. How is this full and fair compensation? More injured workers will now be forced to supplement their compensation payments with welfare, charity or other programs that may be out there. I ask you, is this acceptable? Is this what we want to see happen? We say no, that this is contrary to the basic principles established as far back as 1915 that I referred to when I began my presentation.

Why take a universally punitive approach to all injured workers? What about the impact on families who are dependent upon this income as their only source of family income? This will result in shifting the cost of compensation from employers to our health care system, to our welfare system and ultimately to Ontario taxpayers, although it will be paid out of another ministry.

To quote from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups:

"The poverty imposed on the injured worker and his" — or her — "family often results in problems not only in the family, but in the community as well. Marriage breakdown is a common side effect. Social agencies come into play here. Subsidized housing, mother's allowance benefits and OHIP are only a sample of the many programs that are called upon to support this family. There is also a level of crime that goes along with poverty that is another hidden cost.... What about the direct hit on pensioners by reducing their inflation protection? Estimates are that over a 20-year period, they would stand to lose approximately 30% of their income."

We do not support any further reductions to the indexation of the benefits.

Concerning insured employment and injuries and disease: Under section 12 of the bill no benefits for mental stress unless it is an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event arising in the course of employment — traumatic event to be defined. These definitions become absolutely crucial, because as we all know, they can be defined in such a manner to limit grossly who might benefit and make it difficult for some who justly may be in a position to receive compensation.

On section 13, the restriction on chronic pain: This represents a lesser entitlement for chronic occupational stress and for pain as well. We believe that chronic stress conditions to which work was a significant contributing factor should be compensable on the same basis as any other work-related illness. We grant that it is sometimes difficult; we also grant that it is sometimes not difficult to see the source of someone's illness.

I'd like to quote from a L.A. Liversidge and Associates in their report. They did a report, Bill 99 Review and Analysis of Proposed Changes to the Workers' Compen-

sation Act. It seems to me they make a very important point about the removal of stress claims from the jurisdiction of the board:

"There is an inherent pitfall in the complete removal of chronic occupational stress from legislation, which may open the door for courtroom action against employers. A situation should never arise where the worker can sue the employer for a potential work injury. It is completely counter to the fundamental principles of a no-fault workers' compensation system...yet Bill 99 by removing jurisdiction for stress cases from the board, jurisdiction is provided to the courts.... It would be preferable to set out, in very rigid and strict language, what the entitlement criteria are, but not have legislation that says stress caused by employment is considered non-compensable" — which in effect, of course, Bill 99 does do.

I share the concern of the panel that such a move would seriously affect their ability to deal with contentious issues in an open and unbiased way.

I'd like to quote from the Occupational Disease Panel. They have some concerns and I'm going to quote from their annual report, which is readily available to everyone. I had a chance to review it and it is a very sound document. The panel says in their annual report:

"The panel has guarded its independence. It has, therefore, been able to make recommendations based on the available data and has not been required to make politically acceptable recommendations. The panel has measured its success by carefully examining the criticisms of its work, and there has been no significant criticism of the scientific foundation of the panel's work. This success is the result of the combination of excellent advice received from international experts and the panel's insistence that all evidence be subject to scientific peer review."

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Anyone who has had any contact with the protocols of research knows that is fundamentally a common procedure with any reputable research firm or researcher or scientist. The panel goes on to say:

"There is no evidence to support the claim that an operating department within the WCB would be capable of carrying out independent research or would be able to provide their own governing body, the corporate board, with politically uncomfortable advice. If the government is committed to restructuring the ODP" — the Occupational Disease Panel — "the panel is unanimous in the opinion that an independent research function responsible for occupational disease must be maintained. The research department must be able to give advice to WCB based on the best scientific advice available, even when the advice conflicts with corporate objectives. The need for independence from operating departments is critical."

Our Liberal caucus agrees with the panel's assessment of its status.

Further in this particular vein, the Occupational Disease Panel has a particular recommendation for fear of losing its scientific independence, to be able to function as scientists and produce the kind of work it has been able to produce heretofore. They have a recommendation for the government, and I think it is very sound advice.

We will consider supporting this when we come to the committee process. The recommendation is that:

"The government establish an occupational disease secretariat which would be administratively linked to the WCB. Within the secretariat there would be an advisory committee which would set the agenda for research and provide advice to the WCB corporate board...."

"An occupational disease secretariat would ensure that the advances made with respect to policy development concerning occupational disease recognition would be maintained. It would also continue to provide a solution to the problems concerning occupational disease adjudication and prevention that have plagued the WCB during the first 70 years of existence."

Our caucus recognizes the difficulty in making the causal link sometimes between work and occupational disease and in establishing entitlement for occupational diseases. We are also receptive to the idea of treating occupational disease in a separate manner because it seems to us to warrant that. One such way is through a universal disability insurance proposal which I will refer to later.

Returning to part IV, which deals with health care, in subsection 37(3) and subsection 21(5), workers must consent to releasing medical information to their employer when filing their claim. I always get a little nervous when I see legislation after legislation come back and continually refer to other people having access to their own personal medical files.

The issue of the disclosure of medical records is and has always been a highly sensitive matter. I do not need to remind my colleagues in the House of the recent events in early December last year which forced the Minister of Health to step aside — actually, it was this year — pending a review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner: the disclosure of confidential information about a member of the medical profession by a member of his staff. This was a very sensitive issue and the minister chose to step aside until it was reviewed, and it bore out that he indeed was not involved in it — just to illustrate and underline the great sensitivity related to medical records. You will recall, of course, the heated debate on this issue with Bill 26 and the subsequent amendments that were brought in by the government following the debate that took place and the response of the commissioner of freedom of information and his letter to the government.

While disclosure is "for the sole purpose of facilitating the worker's return to work," who can be certain that privacy concerning the medical record will be protected? As the privacy commissioner said in the postscript to his report on the disclosure of personal information to the Ministry of Health: "A basic truth about privacy is that privacy once lost cannot be regained. Once personal information 'is out the door,' there is simply no way of eliminating knowledge of it."

Since the only medical information that a health professional treating the worker is authorized to give the board, the worker and the employer concerns the worker's functional abilities, and the disclosure is for the sole purpose of facilitating the worker's return to work and is on the prescribed form, of course that begs the question,

what will the form look like? What will it change? How often can it change? Who can change it? Will it include a rider that states that the information (1) only comments on the worker's functional ability and (2) is for the sole purpose of facilitating the worker's return to work? Will the worker have an opportunity to see the form after completion by the health care professional and prior to its being forwarded to the board or to the employer with his or her approval? What recourse is there for the worker who objects to information on the form, believing that it does not relate to (1) or (2) above or that it may jeopardize his or her chances for ongoing work with that particular employer or perhaps even with other employers?

The careful drafting of the information requested on the form truly cannot be underestimated, as there is great potential for slippage of information which the employer and the board do not need to know. I'm very concerned about these provisions, particularly the potential for abuse, intended or unintended. The fact is that it can do considerable damage to the future of an employee, a worker.

Dealing with universal disability insurance: While it's not the subject of this bill, I'm intrigued by the concept I referred to a minute ago of a national universal disability insurance program to replace the patchwork system we have throughout Canada of federal, provincial and private sector insurance programs. These include the Canada pension plan — CPP — disability benefits, employment insurance benefits, the provincial workers' compensation programs, provincial social assistance, long-term disability offered by private insurance plans and in some provinces car insurance plans which cover any individual whose disability is caused by a car accident.

This proposal was the subject of the federal task force headed by federal member of Parliament Andy Scott. The title of their report is *Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act*, which was released in October of last year. Its conclusions were that a comprehensive approach is needed based on some good, sound consultation and collaboration.

"The federal government must take the lead in placing Canada's disability income system on the table for discussion with the provinces and the territories." Of course the province can be a positive party at the table, and must be, if we are to make a contribution along these lines. "The ultimate goals must be to simplify the patchwork and make sure that any new system is comprehensive, financially sustainable, and comparable in different provinces and territories. The government of Canada should approach changes to the disability income system that reflect the following principles:

"Where applicable, disability income programs should provide incentives for people with disabilities to move into the labour market.

"Changes to disability income programs should remove disincentives to employment.

"Income programs should not impede individuals' mobility between Canadian jurisdictions.

"The additional costs that disability imposes on an individual should be treated and compensated separately."

I support some of those recommendations.

"The government of Canada should:

"In the longer term, work with the relevant partners in the public and the private sectors, and with people with disabilities, to reconfigure the existing set of disability income programs, combining earnings replacement and income support functions, and taking into account the tax system and the need to find ways to compensate individuals for the additional cost of disability.

"In its discussions with the provinces regarding the Canada Health Act and social transfers, they should establish the importance of removing the link between income and access to supports and services for persons with disabilities, and introduce the idea of a comprehensive disability supports program with pan-Canadian objectives, principles and values, to provide disability-related supports and services, independent from income programs."

1620

I would hope the Minister of Labour, Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister of Health agree with this direction, this longer-term strategy. As the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups said in their submission to the Jackson report: "The real costs of an injured worker who is not working are many. The costs often show up outside of the workers' compensation system. A pension of \$200 to \$300 per month is obviously not adequate for a single person, let alone a family. Unemployment insurance is usually the first government agency tapped for support, welfare is next, and Canada pension benefits are also used."

I'd like to talk for a moment about vocational rehabilitation. While it's not specifically addressed in this bill, except in section 104, we're concerned about vocational rehabilitation services being privatized. We have received calls and letters from groups that currently provide these services, including the official bargaining agent for vocational rehabilitation case workers at the Workers' Compensation Board, referring to a recent announcement approved by the government-appointed chair of the WCB and the WCB board of directors to reorganize the WCB and to privatize the vocational rehabilitation function currently being carried out within the board.

I'd like to quote a section of a letter that was sent to us by the vocational rehabilitation case workers related to the Workers' Compensation Board. They say:

"As the official bargaining agent for the vocational rehabilitation case workers with the...(WCB), CUPE Local 1750 is incensed at the recent announcement approved by the government-appointed chair..., Glen Wright, and the WCB board of directors, to reorganize the WCB and privatize the vocational rehabilitation function currently being carried out within the board.

"This decision appears to be based, in part, on a report by KPMG. Management consultanting is only one of the services offered by KPMG. They also happen to be in the business of career...counselling, as well as acting as employer representatives on cases pending within the WCB appeals system. KPMG will benefit from their own recommendations.

"This represents a clear and obvious conflict of interest and is tantamount to hiring a private health insurance

company to comment on the benefits of maintaining a publicly funded system or, more simply put, asking your mother-in-law to mediate your divorce settlement. Vested interest, or what?

"We all agree that changes must be made to the system, particularly in the area of mandated return-to-work programs with the accident employers. However, there will always be a need to provide vocational rehabilitation to those injured workers who cannot be accommodated with the employer's business. The proposed industry must operate on a profit in order to maintain financial solvency; as such, when faced with a choice between the needs of the injured workers and the pursuit of profit, the question becomes academic."

These case workers are saying that we should review the changes or, at the very least, insist on an unbiased review of vocational rehabilitation within the WCB by a panel representing both labour and industry. I expect that we will hear more from the vocational rehabilitation case workers in our province-wide hearings.

In conclusion, I'd like to say that I'm sure we all agree that the WCB needed to, and has to, get its financial house in order. But of course, as many questions are raised, it comes down to: On what basis and who will pay what? Sounds like Who Does What, a common phrase these days.

Workers' compensation is supposed to be based on balance; it's not supposed to be one-sided. But this is the direction this government is moving towards. We welcome the opportunity to make the board function more efficiently and effectively for injured workers and, by extension, for employers. We all agree that workplace injuries serve no one. Injuries don't serve the employer and they don't serve the workplace, nor do they serve workers who are trying to earn a living for themselves and for their families.

This legislation, however, is not totally to do with that kind of reorganization. We're concerned. We would like to see meaningful reform and we would like to see that this direction of the government deals with a fair and balanced system, but I fear that it has much to do with taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in the province. This bill isn't dealing with fairness or equity, nor is it about balance, the fundamental values upon which the act is based. It's not about total reform. In the final analysis, it comes down to who pays and it's built on an ideological agenda that is designed to blame the weakest in our society for all our problems.

That has been the agenda of this government in many sectors. We have seen it in cuts to our hospitals; we've seen it in cuts to seniors, to our children, to schools; and now you're going to see it affecting injured workers. This will add to the polarization that this government has already sown throughout this province. It has pitted rich against poor, rural against urban, labour against management. There will be real winners and losers in this, but somehow it seems to me that it's the weakest and the most vulnerable who always end up getting the short end of the stick.

I'm looking forward to wide-open public hearings on Bill 99 so that the government will have an opportunity to listen to the people who are most affected by this

legislation, the people who this act was meant to serve, both employers and the workers too. This is what the government should have done first, then drafted legislation and then submitted it for further public hearings. I'm happy that we now will finally have the opportunity to travel throughout Ontario and to listen to those people who will be greatly affected by this legislation and those people who we have a responsibility to attempt to truly serve and support.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Colle: I want to commend my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his very thoughtful, very constructive comments. He's made a number of suggestions that I hope the minister and her staff will listen to because he has, I think, in all sincerity tried to bring out some of the positive aspects of compensation reform but also some of the failings of this bill. I hope those comments are listened to. I think they were done in the spirit of adding to the attempt to make this a better bill, and I hope the hearings can certainly go forward with that attitude and that it's not just going to be like a lot of the hearings this government engages in that are sort of a perfunctory type of approach. I have faith that this Minister of Labour will take a different tack than other ministries and really listen to the opposition and listen to people affected by this legislation in terms of how this bill could really benefit a greater number of people.

So I want to certainly commend my colleague from Ottawa Centre for bringing forth a number of constructive and very substantive issues that need to be addressed, not only in terms of this bill per se but in terms of our whole attitude towards workplace injuries, subsequent rehabilitation programs, retraining programs, all these areas which are integral parts of the way we look at our society and how it treats workers and how it treats their disabilities which result from workplace accidents. Again, I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for bringing those forward in a very constructive way.

The name of this bill, or the change in the name of this bill, perhaps says it all, in that from the Workers' Compensation Board now we're going to a workplace safety/security entity. I think that tells us where this government is coming from. They're trying to get away from their responsibility to the worker, and they're doing it, obviously, not only in this bill but in other bills. They're trying to say, "We're more interested in the workplace." But you've got to put the worker as the central focal point of any legislation and any workplace. In other words, it's the human being who offers his or her work, makes that human contribution, that should be the focal point of legislation.

1630

There are a number of administrative and functional changes this bill undertakes to introduce. But what the bill really does that is contrary to the original intent of this type of legislation, which I guess goes back to the Industrial Revolution in England and in Europe, is that workers were taken for granted. They were looked upon as simple resources that could be replaced, that didn't have to have any type of protection. They were to be used by the owners of the factories and industries for profit.

That's why workers' compensation legislation came up through the years, going back through great philanthropists like Robert Owen in England in the Industrial Revolution who, although he was a well-to-do person, realized there was a great deal of benefit for him and for society if he were to treat workers properly. I think that began a very positive trend over 130 years ago, where even people with money realized that it made good business sense to invest in workers and protect workers.

Out of that context we've come a long way over the last 130 years to improve and protect workers. But I think this legislation almost tries to deny the fact that workers, whether they like it or not, need support, because workers will be injured on the job. No matter what you do in terms of legislation, no matter what penalties you impose, no matter what changes, there will always be human error, technological error, there will always be mechanical failure, there will always be mistakes made in the workplace. That is a guarantee. You can't legislate that potential away. There are all kinds of remedies and perhaps ways of diminishing that kind of impact, but that's always going to be with us. It's an obligation upon government and people who have the good fortune of owning companies, big or small, to ensure that protection stays in place.

Just two days ago a woman came into my office who was very concerned about a number of issues, but she was really concerned about whether or not this province was going backward in time. She said every time she picks up the newspaper there's some other assault on hospitals, on schools, on people. She said she wants to pick up the newspaper and read some good news once in a while. She said, "Is there any way we can make this government stop and listen for a bit?"

She related a story to me about her father, who used to work in heavy construction in Toronto in the 1930s and 1940s. She talked about how she used to dread every time something came on the radio which talked about a cave-in on a construction site. She said the whole family would be sick to their stomach all night long wondering if it was their father, their dad, who was caught in some kind of cave-in on a construction site here in Toronto. When their father came home at 6, 7 or 8 o'clock at night all covered with dirt and mud, they would sigh with relief because they said, "You made it home."

This is the kind of atmosphere that existed and that I think we've improved upon a great deal. We don't want to get back to that, where essentially you're worried about whether or not the workers in your family are going to be safe and, if they do get injured, if they're going to be protected.

This man is typical of a lot of workers, and a lot of families depend on that breadwinner. They cannot be jeopardized, because when you jeopardize them, you jeopardize the whole family. If that father is hurt on the job, or the mother is, that whole family will suffer, especially if there are young children involved. So we're not just looking at workers' compensation protection for the individual, we're looking at the impact it has on that whole family.

Certainly in my riding and many of your ridings, I think, on this opposition side or the government side,

there are a lot of people who have given really the best of their youth, the best of their strength, to making this a great province and city. They worked in factories, they worked on construction. I know I've got a lot of them in my own riding with backs that are basically unworkable, in constant pain — shoulders, knees, you name it. These are people who in good faith gave of what they had, and that is their labour, and they gave it in vulnerable jobs.

I've got a lot of men and women who are in their 50s and 60s in my riding who, through no fault of their own, are unable to work in that field. In fact, they'd love to go back working in heavy construction or in the factory they worked in; they can't. They've gone through attempts to get other jobs and those jobs aren't there. They'd love to get a white collar job or some other easier job; those aren't there. We've got unemployment rates in certain parts of Metro of 20% or 30%, people who are underemployed, unemployed, working part-time. These injured workers would love to get out there and get retrained and find another job, but every time they knock on a door, they're told: "Sorry, we're not hiring. We just downsized. We just laid off people." Especially for people who reach a certain age, there's a great deal of difficulty.

For the minister to say in this legislation, "One of the reasons we're reducing the compensation for people from 90% to 85% is we want to encourage them to go and get a job," I think is really a punitive, regressive thing to do. First of all, the jobs are not there. They want to work, for the most part. They would love to have a reasonable job to replace the job they lost because of injury. For the minister to say, "Those jobs are out there; you just don't want it, so we'll reduce your compensation and therefore you're going to go out there and get that job," is really shortsighted of the minister.

I think it points to the fact that perhaps there is, as some people have said, a hidden agenda, and that is to carve out more money from the vulnerable, from people who are targeted by this government. You don't see this government taking money out of the banks or the big corporations, but it will carve money out of people on social assistance, it will charge user fees to seniors for their prescription drugs, and now it's cutting the measly pension it has for compensation by 5%.

Why is that necessary when this government can afford to give away hundreds of millions of dollars in a tax cut to the wealthiest people in this province? That is what doesn't make sense to ordinary working people. They say, "Why would you cut my compensation, why would you make me pay for user fees for my prescription drugs when I'm sick, yet you can give a tax cut to the rich and the well-do-do?" It just rankles people. I don't know if you ever try to explain that to people, but that is one thing that doesn't fly.

Here we've got people who have been injured on the job, who are perhaps in pain, who can't do what they wanted to do at work and probably are limited in what they can do around the house, and they are rewarded now with less money in their meagre pension. What would they do with that money? They're not going to go off, like the Conrad Blacks of this world, to the Turks and Caicos and Venezuela and Fiji. These are people who with that extra 5% would just buy maybe another pair of

shoes, another coat for their kids, or maybe not be in debt as much as they are now; would be able to pay that hydro bill on time. That's what that 5% is.

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What does that tax cut really do for the Conrad Blacks of this world? What sense does it make to give that money to Conrad Black and take it away from that injured construction worker? If there's anybody on the other side who could explain that to me, I would like that explained.

Even if you look at the pure economics of it, supposedly you're doing the tax cut because you want to stimulate, to prime the pump; you want to get more money into circulation and create jobs. Well, what do you think that person on compensation does with the money? They go buy the consumer goods. They may go shopping for food. They're also priming the pump. They're also keeping employment in the small stores. They may buy a refrigerator. How many refrigerators can Conrad Black buy? How many trips to Fiji can Conrad Black take? That money Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel spend is not being spent here; it's being spent in London, it's being spent in Fiji. It's not being spent on Main Street, Ontario. At least the injured workers are here in our cities and towns and neighbourhoods. They're the ones who keep the local economy going, because they need to buy food, they need to buy clothing.

Why would you punish them? Why would you take \$6 billion out of their pockets and in essence give it to the Conrad Blacks of this world, who don't need government handouts, so you say. That is the crux of this bill that our party is most against: It is taking money away from people who need it most. Their cost of living is not going to be reduced by 5%, the cost of their children's clothing is not going to be reduced by 5%, their heating bills aren't going to go down 5%, yet the minister makes the assumption that they can do without.

I say to the minister, perhaps the bank presidents can do without, maybe the bank presidents should get a 5% reduction. The bank presidents and the corporate élite in this province have profited by the workers, whether it be the bank teller, the factory worker, the construction worker. They're the ones who should be rewarded in this province. This government is spending too much time rewarding the ones who don't need those handouts. This tax cut handout to the Conrad Blacks and the bank presidents is just plain stupid economics and is plain unfair.

Let the workers who are injured get that little bit of spending money so they can keep their dignity. Let the workers keep their pride. Let them be able to go to the grocery store and not worry whether they've got enough money to buy that extra bag of groceries. That is what this 5% reduction in Bill 99 is all about. It's going to take grocery money out of people's pockets — simple as that.

You've got to equate this bill to fairness. That is what is most unfair about this bill, that it tends to make life much more difficult for people who, through no fault of their own, have been hurt on the job. I know a lot of people like to be judge and jury and say, "That person isn't really hurt," and, "That person is only semi-hurt."

But I say to you, if you are unfortunate enough to be injured on the job, who would you want to be your judge? I'm sure it's easy to be a judge, but I say that this across-the-board cut, assuming that everybody can do with less when they are vulnerable and may be unable to find another replacement job, is really unfair.

Now there are going to be added powers whereby the employer can even look at personal medical records. This is an intrusion that is linked to Bill 26, which gives powers — that's where it brings out the mentality of this government. This government claims to be small government, yet it is one of the most intrusive big governments this country has ever seen.

This government is intervening in classrooms. Now it's going to dictate what education is all about. This government is going to intervene in the whole area of how municipalities are run. This government is going to intervene in hospitals. This government intervenes everywhere you look. This government is in your face. People are starting to say, "I thought you people were talking about less government, less intrusion."

Here, even in this bill, you've got the government giving permission to employers to snoop into medical files. It's no different from the abhorrent powers you gave in Bill 26. That is not something, supposedly, that right-wing, conservative governments are supposed to do, yet you've given this other power of intervention, this other power to employers of snooping into medical records of injured workers. Some employers will not abuse it, but there will be those who will use it to intimidate their workers. You can be guaranteed that certain employers will intimidate their workers by having access to these files. That is most unfortunate for a government that claims to be small government, that doesn't want to get involved in everyday affairs.

We see that this government is on a daily basis becoming more intrusive, more centralized. It's everywhere. You can't get away from Mike Harris. You turn on the television and he's there 24 hours a day. It's just like in 1984, when Big Brother was there with all those television cameras in every room in the world. That is what is happening with this government. Mike Harris and this government feel they can be everywhere and can control everything. People are starting to stand up to that. People are starting to say: "Get out of my bedroom, get out of my classroom, get out of my hospital, Mike Harris. You have destroyed and ruined enough."

Now what is Mike Harris doing? He's giving more power to intrude and make life more difficult for injured workers. How low can Mike Harris stoop that he has to take 5%, \$6 billion, out of the pockets of injured workers? Is there a government anywhere in this civilized world that would stoop as low as to take \$6 billion out of the pockets of injured workers and on the other hand give that money threefold to the bank presidents and their friends like Conrad Black? That is what this bill is doing and that is what is so outrageous about it.

There is just an impossible attempt by this government to rationalize that they are doing this for efficiency reasons; that they are doing this because the system is broken, is in a disastrous state. It's the classic approach this government uses with compensation that they use

with everything else. They have claimed the education system is in a disastrous state. They claim the hospitals and the municipalities are. They claim this province is in a state of collapse.

They're doing this because they mean to demean. They mean to let the public lose confidence in workers, lose confidence in teachers, lose confidence in nurses, so they can go in with their agenda and take money out of hospitals, out of classrooms, and use that money to reward the Conrad Blacks of this world. That is the simple agenda of Mike Harris and bills like Bill 99.

They're out to feed that tax cut monster, which even Ralph Klein, their cousin in Alberta, says is crazy. That's what makes this government crazy. That's what makes this bill crazy. They're crazy to feed that tax cut, which is driving everything this government does. They need to get money from injured workers to pay for a harebrained tax cut that was developed, I think, by Milton Friedman on the back of some envelope or some serviette in some restaurant in New Jersey. That is what is driving this bill, driving this government, driving the ministers. They're told: "Go in there and tear apart the family support program. We need money. We don't care what havoc you leave in its wake. That's fine, just as long as you get the money out. Go into Toronto, rip all the money out of the schools, rip money out of programs in cities. We don't care what the havoc is, as long as we get that money for our tax cut."

1650

Now workers who may have fallen on the job, had something hit them, who may have slipped, who may be suffering from other chronic work-related health problems, are going to be victimized with this unfair reduction in their compensation. This is something that is not fair, is not right, doesn't make economic sense, as I said before, because workers when they spend money create as many jobs as Conrad Black when he spends money, probably twice as many jobs, because the workers at least spend their money on Main Street, Ontario.

Who knows where Conrad Black is today? I'll tell you where the injured workers are today. They're in the cities and towns of Ontario. If they had Conrad Black's money, they would be shopping tonight in the shopping centres in Listowel or in London or in Lincoln. They'd be shopping tonight, spending a little extra money, buying more cheese, buying more shoes, buying another shirt, paying a bill. That's what they would do with this. We know that. But I don't think you've ever seen Conrad Black in Listowel. You'll never see him there. You may read one of his editorials commending the tax cut, but you'll not see Conrad Black buying a pair of shoes in Listowel, Ontario. If you do, I want to be there when he's there. I would like to take a picture of him buying a pair of shoes in downtown Listowel.

In terms of the bill, another part of fairness being removed, the appeals tribunal is now being taken away from the workers. The appeals tribunal was sort of a court of last resort for ordinary workers who could appeal a bureaucratic decision. That is now being taken away from that worker. If that worker feels they've been mistreated, that the information wasn't all-inclusive in

their case, they now have to take that to court. They can't go to the appeals tribunal.

That means it's going to be more expensive for a worker to be heard and given that appeal. They can't get it now because the government has closed down another avenue for appeal. You know what lawyers cost, so you're going to ask a person who has been injured on the job, who's probably way behind in his rent payments or way behind in his bills to now have to go hire a lawyer to try and maybe rectify a wrong decision that the compensation board made.

That's what the government is saying: Now you have to go and hire a lawyer to ensure you are heard. These people who will be forced to go to lawyers will be paying more money out of their pockets to pay for lawyers, when they could have had a right to appeal under the old legislation. That is not fair to the workers. It diminishes their attempt at achieving fairness and equity. That's another negative of this bill.

Also there have been cuts to the worker adviser office and the employer adviser office. That office has been cut by 30%. These were worker advisers who could give professional advice to people who were caught, perhaps, in some kind of bureaucratic red tape. This office is being cut by 30%. This adds another burden to the ordinary worker who may have wanted to get some simple advice on how to go through the bureaucratic hoops that this type of legislation will impose on it. That has been taken away by one third with this 30% cut. That doesn't help the worker. I don't know who it helps by doing that.

As you know, the other thing that is also most upsetting is that injured workers' pension benefits will now be reduced. We know that pensioners all over this province are at their limit in terms of their ability to get by. Now you're going to have more pensioners who are going to have their pensions cut who were on some kind of disability because of work-related injuries. Their pensions will now be cut as a result of this bill. How fair is that? What is that going to do to the lifestyle of the ordinary pensioner who is living in modest means? What sense does it make to even cut that pensioner's benefits, as this bill does?

That is not going to make this economy any better, it's not going to give anybody their pound of flesh, but it will hurt that pensioner who's probably going to try and decide whether they've got enough money for food or for prescription drugs. That's the bind you're putting the pensioner in. Pensioners now, especially pensioners now who fall under this category, will have to make those impossible decisions or choices: "Do I buy the prescribed medicines that I have to pay \$2 for now on every prescription fee? Do I pay \$6.11, the \$100 deductible? Or do I go buy the food that I need?" Do you know what they do in most cases? They probably go without the medicine; therefore they get sicker. That's what you're going to do to a lot of these pensioners, because you're going to reduce their pensions when they go into retirement after the age of 65.

There will also no longer be payments made for workers with either long-term chronic mental stress or chronic pain that persists beyond a specified time. As you

know and as many authors like Jeremy Rifkin are telling you, the type of work, the nature of work is changing. So it's not going to be just the ordinary, straightforward case of a worker perhaps hurting a knee and having a knee dislocated. There are going to be a lot more stress-type disabilities, chronic stress disabilities that are going to result from mental stress as well as physical causes. In the future we're going to see more of that type of disability in the workplace.

What is the government doing? It's restricting a worker's ability to make that the basis of their claim now. It's narrowing that to make it very difficult for these types of injuries. They're going to be more prevalent in the future, yet the government is now going to make that much more difficult for workers to make that type of an appeal and that type of a request. I think the government is being very shrewd but not very fair, because it knows there are going to be more stress-related job injuries caused by mental stress and chronic pain, yet the government is diminishing the worker's ability to access any kind of compensation for that. That is something that doesn't help in terms of where future trends are going, but it does help the government extract its money from injured workers, on the backs of injured workers.

You know what it is too? I think the most difficult thing to accept in all of this is that this is not the only type of added problem injured workers have. Many injured workers find it most difficult, because they may have worked in a workplace with a great deal of pride for 20 years, for 15 years. Then, when you are injured, you have the potential of losing your self-esteem and pride. This bill does not do anything for their self-esteem and pride, because even if a worker is injured, with their pride intact they probably have a greater chance of recovery physically, they probably have a greater opportunity to find other jobs.

1700

This kind of reduction in their compensation pension will mean they probably will have less money for proper clothing, less money, as I said, for their family, so the stress will be accentuated. Their sense of self, their self-esteem, will be diminished. You might say that's one of the intangible negatives, yet it is a negative that results from this bill. These workers sometimes have very little else to take pride in but their work, but now their injury causes them to lose that pride. Then the government punishes them with a reduction in their compensation. That is adding salt to the wounds. These workers don't need it, nor will it help them to find new jobs and to be retrained, because self-esteem and pride are essential if they're going to be productive members of society. It would be great if part of this bill or a companion bill had a massive investment in retraining and rehabilitation of injured workers, but that's not there. Most of those programs that do that have been cut back severely. This government has even cut back English-as-a-second-language funding. The adult day schools all across this province are cut back. For these injured workers who may want to go into a school and perhaps improve their English as a second language, that's going to be dramatically reduced because of the cutbacks this government has made.

What are the chances of an injured worker getting another job? Does this bill do anything, or are there other things this government has done, to enhance the rehabilitation aspect of the way government treats workers? I have certainly seen nothing comprehensive from this government, no investment of any significance in that area for injured workers and their attempts to get back into the workforce. This is a very competitive workforce that we're in. If you don't have up-to-date skills, you will almost find locked doors and closed doors almost every time you make an application. With no comprehensive rehabilitation and retraining component and no proposed one with meaningful investment by this government, it's not going to make life easier for the injured workers. What are their prospects?

If you're 50, 55, or 60 years of age and injured on the job, where do you go for retraining, and how do you support your family while you're going through retraining? How do you support a young family of a 35-year-old who is now injured on the job, who may never be able to work at their trade again? What kind of comprehensive investment is there in their future? That is why so many people in this province are feeling very hit upon by this government, because all this government tends to do is punish people. All this government tends to do is take people down and demean them.

We haven't seen anything this government has done lately that encourages people, anything this government does that gives them support. All it tends to do over and over again is attack. It's like a pit bull that keeps attacking the meekest and the most vulnerable in our society, whether it be people on social assistance, whether it be attacking seniors by making them pay user fees for prescription drugs. Now we have an attack on injured workers, and we know that these injured workers sometimes may be categorized by this government as a special interest group, therefore we have to treat them with an iron fist.

Injured workers come from all walks of life. There are injured workers from all political parties, from all religious persuasions, from all walks of life. They are not a special interest group. They are, for the most part, honest taxpayers who have had the misfortune of being hurt on the job.

I know that this government has listened attentively to the corporate side of this debate, and they are doing their bidding with this bill. They are paying attention to the corporate side, and the corporate side is very happy with this bill. There are very few complaints from the corporate side because the corporate side knows that this government is taking care of them. But who is taking care of that injured worker and his or her family? Who is giving that injured worker hope? Where is the hope in this bill? There is very little hope in this bill. There is a lot of rhetoric, there are a lot of mechanical devices in it, but there is no spirit of hope.

That is why I think it's critical that this government, as it entertains public hearings on Bill 99, ensure that they go to all parts of this province to listen to these workers, to listen for their cries of hope, to listen to their stories of how they can't get by with this extra cut and the extra downsizing of their rights under this Bill 99. The govern-

ment has to turn and listen to these workers. It hasn't listened to anybody on everything else, but if there are enough workers who go to these hearings, bring their families and show the government that they are sincere about being treated fairly and equitably, maybe this government will not just pass this bill as other bills without any amendments but will make amendments that will not punish workers, because they don't deserve this arbitrary, unilateral punishment just because of their misfortune.

I think that is what workers are saying right across the province. They're saying that somehow they feel the minister is paying more attention to the corporate interests rather than their interests. They don't mind giving a fair shake to the corporate interests, a fair shake to the factory owners and business owners — but give a fair shake to the workers. We know how well the corporate interests are doing. Look at what's happening on Bay Street: The stock market is doing so well, they're even closing down the trading floor. That's how well it's doing. The stock market is booming, Bre-X aside, but it's doing quite well. The banks are doing famously. So why this government would spend more time, give away more money to the corporate side, is beyond anybody's understanding. They still continue on this road of rewarding, with hard-earned tax dollars, people who don't need the rewards.

It's injured workers, it's the seniors who are on fixed incomes, it's the orderlies in hospitals, it's the teachers' aides, it's the firefighter, it's the ordinary taxpayer who needs help, not the big people. You've done more than enough for the big people in Ontario within the last two years. You've done more in the last two years than they ever deserve or need.

You can't keep ignoring ordinary people. You can't keep punishing the most vulnerable, whether it be the family support parents, whether it be the caretakers in schools, whether it be the ordinary worker in some factory. They're the ones who need your help now. You've done enough damage to ordinary Ontarians. You've done enough damage to their communities and neighbourhoods. You've struck enough fear and loathing throughout this province.

Now, hopefully, this bill will be the beginning, if we can get the minister to say, "We've listened, we heard you," and this bill can be amended to take away the punishment of workers who are injured. Maybe this Bill 99 can be a turning point. I know that people are pessimistic and they realize perhaps the government is fixed on this, they will not turn back, but that is the one plea I make to the minister — I know she is a reasonable person — to perhaps remember in the hearings that these injured workers can be used to make her turn this whole approach of government around and say: "You're right. We've done enough for Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel; let's do something for the ordinary taxpayer who lives on Main Street in Ontario." That is what I hope and what I think my colleague from Ottawa Centre was talking about, that it's got to be something based on justice and equity and fairness. It's not asking this government too much to do that, because that's the big gap here in this bill. This government can meet its fiscal

objectives without hammering ordinary citizens, especially hammering injured workers who have had enough misfortune. Reinvest the moneys you're getting. The revenues are supposed to be up; reinvest it in injured workers, reinvest it in young people, reinvest it in communities rather than giving it away in that foolish, ludicrous tax cut to the most well-to-do in society.

1710

I'm emphasizing that for the Minister of Labour because I think she has the potential to see through the whiz kids and the tiny Tories in the back room who have all the answers. I know some other ministers just do exactly what the whiz kids tell them to do, but I think this minister maybe has a bit more backbone than the other ministers. She may stand up to the backroom whiz kids in the Tory party, she may stand up to the young know-it-alls in the back room and say, "I'm not going to listen to you; I'm going to listen to the people at the hearings."

That minister will get the praise of this party and the praise of people right across Ontario if she stands up to the backroom whiz kids. If those backroom whiz kids try to convince her, she should say, "No, I'm listening to the people." Nobody elected those backroom tiny Tories who feel they have a right to govern without being elected. That is what the Minister of Labour should do. She shouldn't be like the Minister of Municipal Affairs or the Minister of Health and these other ministers who have taken their marching orders from the backroom whiz kids.

I think this Minister of Labour has an opportunity to break away, like Bill Murdoch did and Gary Carr did and the member for Wentworth North. They broke away from the whiz kids and have the backbone to say no to the dictates. Nobody elected the backroom whiz kids. They are there getting a fat salary and doing the bidding of whom? I guess Tom Long and Conrad Black — whoever they're doing the bidding of. But the Minister of Labour I think has enough intestinal fortitude to maybe make the final break, as Carr, Skarica and Murdoch did. Let her listen to ordinary Ontarians and not be bamboozled by those backroom boys who have done the bidding of the bankers and the Conrad Blacks of this world, who are sucking this province dry.

In conclusion, this bill has to be rectified, and the hearings are an opportunity to do that. Our party wants to see changes made in this bill that will take away the punitive aspects of the bill which do harm to injured workers and do harm to their families and to ordinary Ontarians. We are going to urge the minister to listen, to participate and make amendments to this bill which take away those punitive aspects. I thank you for your courtesy and for listening.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the chance to respond to my colleagues in the Liberal Party, the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Oakwood. I would, however, preface my remarks by noting the interest we pay to the position they've taken, given that their new leader, in the debates leading up to their selection of a new leader, supported Bill 99 and was quite keen and anxious to leave some of the provisions that are

in there in place. However, given the struggle that injured workers face in this province against the tyranny of this majority, we and they will take whatever support we can find and appreciate the fact that perhaps now they have seen the light.

I would like to underscore the point that my counterpart, the Liberal labour critic from Ottawa Centre, made when he spoke to the fact that by pushing so many workers off WCB, denying claims, putting them back to work before they're prepared, which quite frankly is the real purpose of this bill, you are offloading on to the taxpayers, the very people you purport to care about most, the cost of the health care bill for those injured workers. You see, when someone is injured on the job through no fault of their own, all the costs for that injury are borne by the WCB.

When you push people outside that system, you put them on to the publicly funded OHIP system, and in some cases, in far too many cases, you push them on to social assistance because they have nowhere else to go. Both of those are funded 100% by the public, so this is a further boon, a further gift to your corporate friends. It's an important point and I applaud my colleague from Ottawa Centre for having made it. Hopefully, the government might actually listen to it.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It's always very interesting to enter a debate that involves the farce known today as the Workers' Compensation Board. I don't think there's anyone in this chamber, in any of the three parties, who agrees that what exists today as the Workers' Compensation Board and the compensation for injured workers is working in the format we presently have. What a huge concern it has always been for all of us that we have this enormous unfunded liability.

What we really want to do, primarily, is to ensure that people who are injured on the job are protected from loss of income. In order to do that, we have to have a source of that funding so that when the accident takes place, those injured workers are secure. What is a tremendous concern for us is that the system isn't working, and what Bill 99 is about is taking a system that isn't working and improving it.

It's not, of course, about building a new office building for \$250 million on leased land from the CBC, which was a decision of the former government, when the Workers' Compensation Board was quite well housed in its existing plant. It is about making differences, and particularly it's about being proactive in the prevention of accidents in the first place so we reduce the number of workers who are injured on the job and who need the compensation they are rightly entitled to.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm pleased to respond to the members for Ottawa Centre and Oakwood. I would differ in my assessment from the member for Mississauga South when she responds to the previous speakers by saying that this bill is actually about fixing the system and ensuring that workers are going to have that access to a guarantee of no loss of income.

One of the surest ways to deal with an issue of whatever unfunded liability there may be, depending on actuarial assessments at any given time, is to reduce workplace accidents. The very strong supportive pro-

grams under the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and the certification and training programs and all of that, which are aimed at getting at the root problem and eliminating workplace accidents, are the surest way to bring some sanity to the system, not to go about giving a cut in rates and premiums to employers and cutting benefits to workers in order to fund that.

I wanted to say particularly that I was impressed by the member for Oakwood's presentation, in its content but also its style. Alliteration is an art. When I heard him talk about urging the minister not to be bamboozled by the backroom boys and the bankers and the Blacks of this world, I thought that was quite good. Also, putting together his comments and a couple of other members', I heard phrases like "the tyranny of the tiny Tories and their totalitarian treachery." You know, it takes real talent to be able to put that together. But what's expressed by that is a really important sentiment, a sentiment that says that in the back rooms of the Premier's office there are people who are unelected, unaccountable and just out of touch with the real lives of working people.

I think this bill is an absolute example of that. I support the comments that have been made by the previous speakers and really urge that people take another look at this bill, because it does not serve the interests of injured workers.

1720

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It doesn't surprise me that members from the third party support the member for Oakwood's statements. He sounds more like he should be coming from the third party. He's been following them on the filibuster and many other things, so I'm sure he'll be there soon.

I think it's incumbent upon me to address some of his fearmongering about "snooping" into medical files. The functional ability form will be just that: It will talk about an injured worker's functional abilities and only that. It will be available for committee hearings, so the member's fearmongering rhetoric will be put to rest.

I also picked up on something the member for Oakwood said. He said, "The government is saying that the system is a mess in order to justify changing it." Well, he's right, we are saying that. The member for Mississauga South said it, but guess who also is saying it? He should look back to what he ran on in the red book. I want to read to you the first thing the Liberal Party said about cleaning up workers' compensation in the last election: "Ontario's workers' compensation system is a mess." They said it and we agree. This bill is about changing and improving the workers' compensation system.

What else did they say? They said, "High premiums are chasing away investment and jobs." We agree and we're addressing that.

They also said, "The unfunded liability is out of control," and this bill is about addressing the unfunded liability. We agree with that, the Liberals agree with that, the NDP agreed with that when they brought in the Friedland formula the first time in the early 1990s. Everybody agrees that the unfunded liability is a big problem. Bill 99 will address it.

I look forward to spending some time with the member opposite on hearings, and I'll read more of what he said in his red book, because 100% of what they said in the red book we've done.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre has two minutes.

Mr Patten: I'd like to acknowledge the comments of the members for Hamilton Centre, Beaches-Woodbine, Mississauga South and Niagara Falls, also on behalf of my colleague from Oakwood. I thought he helped put a human face on what is often simply large bureaucracy. I think he spoke from the heart and, from his personal experience, was able to identify with people who face the unfortunate experience of having to depend on support from general society because, through no fault of their own, they were injured.

I would like to go back to the issue that we said workers' compensation was a mess. Yes, we did say it needed some reorganization, but the difference is how you go about doing it and who ends up benefiting at the end of the day. We also said there would be a freeze, by the way, on premiums. We did not talk about taking money away from those we're attempting to serve. It always comes down to that. All parties agree you've got to address the debt; it's the way in which you go about doing that. We think there's a way you can do that, to not always do it on the backs of the most vulnerable and the weakest in society.

We said we agreed with some components of this, but when you look at it overall, who wins and who loses, the injured workers are not winning on this one. That's why we will raise those issues and we will fight those elements. Hopefully, the hearings we will hold across Ontario will have some impact on the government to be sensitive to the human call of saying you've got to support people when they really need your support to survive with a degree of dignity.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Would you ascertain whether there's a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check for a quorum, please?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the debate. Given the time, it looks like I'll get through just under half the allotted time I have, but I will make the points I have until 6 of the clock and then continue on the next day the government calls the bill.

Speaking of calling the bill, it's interesting that we were advised at about 10 to 12 that this bill would be coming up. It would be very cynical to suggest that the government deliberately waited until the last minute in the hope of maybe catching the opposition without their critics here in this place this day; or perhaps not enough time to notify the leadership in the community and in the labour movement who have a great interest in this; or perhaps they're hoping that with the federal election being called, more than likely, in a couple of days, those people in the communities who care about this wouldn't

have the time or the opportunity. Perhaps that sort of cynicism would be well placed and I probably would not be the only one to share that.

I would also mention in terms of the timing of bringing in Bill 99, in addition to waiting until the last minute to spring it, denying people a chance to be fully prepared, to be here etc, it also puts the lie to the fact that the government claims that they really cared about truck safety. Do you remember that issue? Remember the words about that, Speaker? That's Bill 125 — a bill that's already received first reading, it's been printed, it's ready to go — An Act to improve road safety by making wheel detachments an offence by amending the Highway Traffic Act. I would suggest that if this government truly cared about public safety, if they really thought this was an important enough issue, they would have taken us up on our offer that we would have given second reading to this in one day, providing they allowed it to go out to the public, something we know they can't stand.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I can tell by the heckling of the members and the way the Tory backbenchers are reacting that they're feeling a little sensitive. If you really cared about public safety, why didn't you call Bill 125?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I realize it's getting late on a Thursday afternoon, but I do have to have order. The member for Hamilton Centre has the floor. His time is limited. I want you to give him your attention.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. It's amazing how quickly 90 minutes will go by when one has so much to comment on.

An earlier member talked about the histrionics of my comments. I intend to spend a lot of time talking about the substantive points of this bill and will do it very passionately and with a great deal of conviction, because I happen to believe that this government is targeting and going after injured workers and I intend to make that case here.

I want to finish by saying that if you really cared about public safety, if you really cared about the highways, why didn't you give us proper notice that Bill 125 was going to be debated so the public could be here, so we could be properly prepared and we could get second reading here, get it out to some public hearings and make it the law? No. It was all a charade. It was all just a load of PR meant to show that you give the impression of caring about public safety. When you had a chance to call the bill, that's not the one you called; no, you called Bill 99. So my cynicism, I suggest to you, is very well placed.

Let me also say, by way of leading into Bill 99, that we need now — I predicted this at the beginning of this government, not that I have any great crystal ball; one doesn't need to be a rocket scientist to realize that this is an anti-worker government. I said at that time, when I was accused of fearmongering and raising a lot of rhetoric, that this government really didn't care about workers and that would be shown. Well, you've now got a track record of almost two years. You now have a record that we can look at and bring forward and use as the context for debate around ongoing labour legislation. What is the track record of this government as it relates

to legislation around working people, around people who belong to unions, around people who don't have the benefit of unions and around injured workers and workplace health and safety? What's the track record?

You've got to start, of course, with Bill 7. Bill 7 was a complete rewriting of the Ontario Labour Relations Act, not amendments, not just honouring what you put forward in the Common Sense Revolution; it went way beyond that. In there, you brought forward again the reality and the disgrace of scabs being legalized, forcing thousands of workers to be on strike, on picket lines, where they otherwise would not be, because there are scabs in those locations doing their jobs.

I am very proud of the fact that when we were the government we said: "That's illegal. You're not going to do that to working people." With Bill 7, you brought back the disgrace and the damage and the harm of scabs on the picket line taking away the jobs of people who have chosen —

1730

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member is referring to people as scabs. These are honest, hardworking people who don't deserve to be held in disdain.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for York-Mackenzie, I appreciate your point of order. It's a rather difficult point of order for me, because now we're extending these parliamentary privileges and verbiage etc to outside this House. I understand. I will caution all members it's best not to use inflammatory language. But with the greatest of respect, I don't think this is a word that we've invented in this place, and it has been used in general outside. Having said that, if he was referring to any member opposite in that vein, I would call him to order very quickly. Again, it's a situation that's difficult to call.

Mr Christopherson: The fact of the matter is that the member would of course prefer the term "replacement workers," because that sounds so much nicer. That's what you want people to believe, that you're creating this nice province, that all these things you're doing are to give people choices, to expand their rights. The reality is, my friend, you go on out to some of those picket lines — you'd better bring some friends, though — and you talk to those workers who are on those picket lines for month after month after month because there are scabs crossing the picket line taking away their job and forcing them to stay out on strike longer than they want to, longer than they need to and, quite frankly, longer than they can afford to.

While we're on this subject, let's take a look at exactly who is crossing the picket line. Yes, there are some people who dislike unions, who disagree with the concept there should ever be strikes and therefore they're very proud to cross the picket line. But you know what? An awful lot of those people don't have a choice because of the policies of this government, and quite frankly they had to make a decision between crossing a picket line or putting food on the table. You want to make that choice? I don't.

I'll tell you another thing. An awful lot of those people are visible minorities, new Canadians, who don't even

understand the principles involved. What they do understand is that they can't find a decent job anywhere and somebody finally offered them something. Who is that somebody? These despicable firms that do nothing but hire vulnerable people and bring them in in darkened-windowed vans to go in and do those jobs. Those people are scared. You've got to answer for what's happening to people on both sides of that picket line.

But I would say to any of you who want to take on whether or not the term "scab" is appropriate, go and talk to those workers on picket lines, go talk to them after they've been out for six months, and listen to what they have to say, because you know what? They're Ontarians too and they pay taxes too. It's time you started to think about that.

What else did you do in Bill 7? We now of course have seen public sector workers who work for the province of Ontario denied successor rights. You didn't talk about that in the Common Sense Revolution, you didn't talk about that on the campaign trail, but it was in Bill 7. You gutted the employee wage protection plan that finally gave workers a chance to be paid due wages, vacation, severance and termination. You gutted that. They can't claim for termination or severance pay, and you cut back from \$5,000 to \$2,000 the amount of wages and vacation they can get, and we understand you're now thinking of taking away even that. You didn't run on that platform. That was in Bill 7. What did you do with Bill 7? You brought it into this House and in less than a month rammed it through without one minute of public hearings, not one minute. That's part of the track record.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's called the election.

Mr Christopherson: I hear from the member from Scarborough somewhere who says, "It's called the election." You see, that's the problem. This government believes that once every four years they win an election and therefore they can dictate whatever they want, that they don't have to answer to anybody at all for four years.

Bill 7 is not the only example. You tried to do the same thing on Bill 49, the Employment Standards Act, where you took away rights from the most vulnerable workers, who don't have the benefit and protection of a union. That's their worker bill of rights. You tried to ram that through in a few weeks, but there was enough resistance out there that we forced you out into the public for four weeks. For four weeks we forced you out into the public, and we all know what happened out there. The backbenchers will tell you quietly off the record — I understand they can't say it on the record, but they'll tell you quietly off the record — they got beat up something awful, because the government claimed that Bill 49 was just minor housekeeping, a little bit of tinkering, a little bit of cleaning up. When we got out there in the public and you were forced to listen to the submissions of people who knew what was in that bill, you got slaughtered in every community we were in, bar none. That's another part of your history. That was Bill 49.

The Workplace Health and Safety Agency: The Minister of Labour today stands up and talks about caring about injury prevention, about making sure that workers are not injured and don't catch diseases on the job

because of exposure to certain elements, and yet an agency with a proven track record, an agency that unfortunately for it, when you came to power, had a 50% say, an equal say — God forbid workers should have an equal say in what affects their working lives, because you killed it and you put it back into the WCB. The reality is, it was taken out of the WCB and made a standalone agency because for 50 years the prevention of accidents and illness was not getting the attention it deserved. That's why it was taken out. But you can't handle the fact that workers didn't know their place. How dare they think they have half a say?

Their track record goes further when it comes to workers being in their place. Bill 15 was your first hit on WCB. What did you do there? The essence of Bill 15 was to take away the 50% right, to have half a say, to have an equal say in the running of the WCB. That's what Bill 15 did. I hear you laughing, yabba-dabba-dooing there in the back row, but the fact of the matter is that if you take a look, reach under your desk, there's a binder in there where the bills are. Look at them from time to time. Bill 15 takes away the right of workers and their representatives to have a 50% say on the board of workers' compensation.

1740

Mr Klees: Why don't we talk about this bill?

Mr Christopherson: See, the member again, the one who had the problem with "scab," he doesn't want to talk about that. He wants to talk about this bill. I'm saying to him, through the Speaker, that in order to talk properly about Bill 99 and for the public to truly make up their minds — because they have to listen to you and us and they'll decide who's right or wrong — it's my submission that the public needs to think about your track record and where you've been and what you've already done to injured workers as part of that debate and part of that weighing out. That's why I'm talking about these things.

That was Bill 15. That's already been done. You've taken that away. That was your tee-up for this one, the one where you're really going after the meat and potatoes, the real heart and soul of WCB.

The minister earlier also talked about the fact that there were problems in the WCB. I heard the new PA from Niagara Falls — and might I welcome him to the portfolio and say how much we look forward to having him out on the hustings, out on the street, out in the public as we review this: baptism by fire. I'm sure the first person to congratulate him was the previous PA, the member for Nepean, who quite frankly couldn't get out of that portfolio fast enough.

Let me say too that he was a decent parliamentary assistant, and I quite enjoyed him on a personal level. However, he is stuck in the right-wing rhetoric and the right-wing world that you're all in, and for that he has to be condemned and for that he will have to answer in the next election. But I do wish him well as he moves on. He was an honourable member stuck doing an impossible job, which was defending this minister's and this government's anti-worker legislation out in the public. At times he even had to have the benefit of OPP security to make sure that he could get from his car to the podium and

back safely, because of the way that the workers of this province are so grateful for your agenda.

But that's his experience, and he now gladly passes that on to the member for Niagara Falls, and I welcome him to the portfolio. He's moving around here. You can't hide, you know; it doesn't work. John tried that. We'll find you. But I welcome you to the portfolio and wish you well on a personal level, and a lot of luck, because you're going to need it, particularly trying to defend this piece of legislation that goes after the most vulnerable of our society, injured workers, people injured through no fault of their own.

Members have talked about problems in the WCB, but it's interesting that when they say there are all these problems, one of the first things this government did when they got elected was to kill the royal commission that we had put in place to look at the entire system, to look at the problems that are there, because there are problems. But you want to blame just the injured workers. That's what we have so much difficulty with.

I'm going to speak later about the changes we made. I want to answer the accusations of the Minister of Labour very directly, but let me say that when you stand up now and say that the system needed an overhaul, and at the same time you're part of a government that killed the royal commission, you deny yourself any credibility on that issue, because all you did when you killed the royal commission was take that work and hand it off to Junior Minister Jackson. He went underground and we didn't hear from him for months. All the issues that were left over, that needed to be worked on, are still there. They are not being resolved.

I would caution members when they want to talk about the fact that the system needs work, that there are problems, and when they want to blame the injured workers themselves, that they should ask themselves, "How do we justify shutting down a royal commission?" that, by the way, was over two thirds through completing their work. How do you justify that? We know what the answer is. The answer is you really don't want to make significant changes that make it better for injured workers and fairer for employers. You don't really want to do both. You only want to concentrate on taking care of your corporate pals and making sure that you can keep your promises to them, one of which of course is to take \$6 billion out of the pockets of injured workers and give it directly back to them. That's what's going on here, and that's why we're so upset, because that is a cornerstone of what you're doing and why you're doing it.

The government hasn't learned yet in terms of process, because not only did they ram Bill 7 through with absolutely no public hearings and attempt to ram Bill 49 through with no hearings, and we only managed to force them out in public by putting as much heat as we could, and the labour movement did and a lot of backbench Tories got a lot of heat. The kinds of meetings that Junior Minister Jackson held were very selective meetings, and they were behind closed doors.

Now you're doing the same thing with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, selected meetings with people behind closed doors. No one gets to hear all the submissions. That's the process that you're still follow-

ing, and with this bill we had to force you to commit to province-wide public hearings. We had to force you, because it's not part of your nature to want to listen to anyone else except your friends. Your friends have lots of access; it's everyone else, particularly those who are hurt by your legislation, who can't get access. You know, part of the reason why you're opposed to that is because that really would be fair.

It's interesting today that the minister chose to use the word "fair" a couple of times. That jumps out because the minister, when we watched her ram through the brand-new Ontario Labour Relations Act, the anti-worker Bill 7, removed from the purpose clause the word "fair." We never did get an adequate answer as to why.

The purpose clause in the Ontario Labour Relations Act used to say that one of the purposes of the act was, "To promote the fair and expeditious resolution of workplace disputes," and yet you took the word "fair" out. I think the reason for that is that they've taken away and narrowed the rights of workers so much that by leaving in the word "fair," if they were challenged and taken to any quasi-judicial or judicial court of law in the province, a judge or a tribunal would have to consider the word "fair" and decide whether or not there was fairness. But if you remove it, then you get to define what is "expeditious resolution" and there is no qualifier called "fair." You obviously had a bite of that and found it quite delightful, because we see it again.

The existing Workers' Compensation Act says, "To provide fair compensation to workers who sustain personal injury arising out of..." and it goes on. It's interesting that you didn't try to take it out when you did Bill 15, so a lot of us thought, "Well, maybe there's hope," but no, we now see that in your Bill 99 —

Ms Lankin: No?

Mr Christopherson: Yes, in the purpose clause under "Interpretation," where it used to say, "To provide fair compensation and other benefits to those workers and to the spouses and dependants of deceased workers," "fair" is gone.

Why would you take out the word "fair" when the minister seems to like to use it so much publicly? But then we know that you're great with the words but the words are hollow. This was taken out for legal purposes because you don't really believe in fairness, otherwise you'd leave the word "fair" in, wouldn't you?

It is particularly irking to find the minister continually using the word "fair," but when we look into the legislation, they take out the word "fair." I think that any reasonable person watching today or reading the Hansard would have to say to themselves, "It is rather curious that they would take the word 'fair' out of two key pieces of legislation that affect working people," particularly when this government continues to say that it cares about workers and cares about workplace health and safety.

I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing here, the Honourable Al Leach. It's particularly apropos to raise this while he's present in the House, because the WCB, I would say to the minister, is also a big fan of the KPMG consultant firm, as you of course were when you did the megacity and you had that in-depth, complex, three-week review of the benefits of your new megacity.

This same firm has now brought forward a report that suggests that as much as 75% of the board's case processing — guess what? — can be privatized. Surprise, surprise. All along we've said that one of the goals of this government was to grab as much of the WCB work as it can and hand that off to the private insurance companies so they can make money. And lo and behold, there's a report that says 75% of the processing, you betcha, can be privatized.

One of the things we find particularly upsetting is that within that report they propose to fire 350 vocational rehabilitation staff people. But what's curious, Speaker, given the fact that you had ruled that you found a prima facie case for contempt of this House by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing because he took action that suggested this House had already passed legislation which it hadn't, we see the WCB doing the same thing. They have advised, verbally, 350 voc rehab staff people, "You're gone."

1750

But the law as it currently stands says that those services have to be provided. So the union that represents those workers, CUPE Local 1750, raised this issue publicly. In fact, I would advise members of the government, the president of CUPE Local 1750, Paul Simourd, is here today. He's one of the few who got the word that this bill was being brought forward today, and because he has to represent those workers and what you're doing to them, he's here. If we'd had enough time, I assure you we'd have had a lot of other labour people here. But this bill is not just about the injured workers who will be impacted, it's the workers who are represented by this union leader, by this elected leader.

What does he say about this in the news release of February 14? He said that this announcement is tantamount to the board pulling an Al Leach, simply assuming that the government legislation will be enacted. He goes on to say that if this scheme goes through, the workers of Ontario are no longer going to be served by an impartial and independent system — which is what the WCB is enacted by law to be. They will now be at the mercy of a profit-oriented system, the mandate of which will be to get injured workers or diseased workers back to work as quickly as possible. That's what he had to say.

I'm really glad you're here today, because you get to see the kind of reaction the cameras won't show as they sit there and laugh and smirk about this. Look at them. Look. That's what's going on in this province. That's why you don't want people here.

Interjections.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Nonsense.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Durham East, and Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Ms Lankin: Back to the cave.

The Speaker: Order. That's unparliamentary, with the greatest respect, to the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

I would ask everyone; it's an opportunity for debate on this issue. I appreciate that some members opposite don't agree with the statements being made, but the member has the right to put these statements. I would ask that you just — nine more minutes.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Well, you may not like it. I understand that. But he has the right to put his points of view.

Mr Gilchrist: It's characterization.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, I hear a lot of people characterizing what a lot of people do in here. It's not up to me to start jumping in and straightening that out. All I'm saying is that he has a right to put his position, and he should be allowed to do that.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your comments.

I would also like to point out, along the same vein, that this same report, which is likely to be adopted — we don't know if it all has, we're not sure, but certainly we do know that those 350 vocational rehabilitation workers have been told verbally that they're gone and they should already start looking for other work. I would say good luck to them in the world you're creating in Ontario in terms of trying to find equivalent, decent-paying jobs that allow them to help people the way these jobs do.

That's why it cuts both ways. They get a decent-paying job with decent benefits, thanks to their union, in recognition of what they deserve, and their service — that's what public service is all about — helps working people, injured workers, among the most vulnerable in our society. That's where both benefit. That's why it's so upsetting and alarming and depressing to watch what you're doing to this province.

What else does that report say? One of the things it says is that an employer claims representative in the restructured WCB — get this — would earn their salary plus a "performance bonus" to be decided on factors such as degree of employer satisfaction and the employer's experience-rating statistics.

It's bad enough that there's a financial incentive for employers to have injured workers removed from claims, but it goes way beyond the pale to suggest that someone who's part of the processing team that decides whether claims are going to be allowed would receive more money, a financial incentive, if there are more claims denied or more claims shortened. That's part of what this report suggests, and I would say to honourable members of this House from all parties that the government members would have no problem with that at all. They'd have no problem, because that fits with their philosophy of how we ought to slice and dice work in this province. Everything points to the dollar sign, to the bottom line — everything.

In the few minutes I have left, I want to talk about dollars, and this is the point I'll pick up on when we again resume debate of Bill 99. Government members, the minister in particular and I'm sure the new PA — there he is — will learn the mantra to talk about the unfunded liability as a crisis. Look at this: The stars have lined up to accommodate my point, because who just strolled in the House but the Minister of Education, the prince of crisis. He stands and takes a bow. This is the fellow who's caught on tape saying, and I'm paraphrasing, "We need to create a crisis so we can justify the things we're going to do."

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: Just to get the reference correct, it was "invent a useful crisis."

Laughter.

The Speaker: Thank you for your helpful clarification.

Mr Christopherson: It would be a lot funnier if it didn't end up hurting so many people, but I stand corrected.

Hon Mr Snobelen: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: Sit down, Minister. Sit down, please, and give us our time.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, order. On a point of privilege, the Minister of Education.

Hon Mr Snobelen: An example of an unuseful crisis might be a \$100-billion debt.

Mr Christopherson: If the minister is finished playing, the point is that he suggested he needed to create a crisis so he could justify the things he was going to do. The point we make consistently, and so do injured workers and the workers who are there in Local 1750, who know what's going on, is that the phoney crisis around the unfunded liability is constantly being thrown forward as a shield to try to justify what you're doing, but it doesn't wash.

Number one, the unfunded liability is not money owed by taxpayers; it is money that's owed by employers. Employers owe that money because the historic deal in 1914-15 was that workers would give up the right to sue — if they were injured on the job, they couldn't sue their employer in court — in exchange for employers paying premiums into a fund that would be used to pay workers who are injured because they couldn't take their employer to court. It removed the right of workers, and that, quite frankly, was seen as a fair tradeoff. So all this

money that's owed is money that's owed injured workers by employers.

It's also interesting to point out that under our reform of the WCB and our legislation, over the last two years — and we know the numbers are going to come forward for the third year in a row — almost \$1.5 billion has come off the unfunded liability. The measures we took eliminated any question of a crisis, but they didn't do it by giving the employers \$6 billion back. That's what's so insidious about this, and you've already done it. January 1 of this year, you made a 5% cut in the premiums that employers pay and took that money out of the pockets of injured workers to pay for it.

The other thing is the WCB has never borrowed a dime. They also have close to \$9 billion in assets. It's very difficult for people to understand how someone whose debt is being reduced by half a billion dollars every year and has almost \$9 billion in the bank is in some kind of crisis. The fact of the matter is that you are using this. The Minister of Labour is using this, the same as the Minister of Education did, to create a phoney crisis to try to justify what is nothing but an attack on injured workers, and worse than that in terms of denying them claims, you're taking money right out of their pockets and giving it to your corporate pals. That's what's going on in Bill 99.

In looking at the clock, Speaker, I would suggest, it being 6 of the clock, that we adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Lundi 28 avril 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 avril 1997

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

THUNDER BAY DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I want to address my statement today directly to the Premier. Premier, if you have any illusions about the people of northern Ontario losing steam in their fight against your attacks on our health and education system or against our seniors and Ontario workers or against your attempts to privatize everything in sight, I recommend you turn your eyes northward and examine what's happening in Thunder Bay today. The Days of Action have arrived in our city, and I can tell you and your Tory colleagues that the message is loud and clear. The people are as mad as hell and they aren't going to take it any more.

It's important, Premier, to understand that the people out in the streets today cross all boundaries. We have the employed and the unemployed, seniors and children, educators and students, health care workers and patients. We have the rich and the poor. Today they are all uniting in an effort to let you know that your vision of Ontario is not one they can abide. They want an Ontario that cares about all of its citizens and an Ontario that takes pride in helping those who are least able to care for themselves. They want a province back that includes everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances.

Premier, you can continue to bully Ontario workers and the rest of us throughout your term in office, but what you can't do is take away our ability to fight back, to stand up and proudly be counted as among those who believe there's a better way to do things. I salute all those who are taking part in today's action and remind them, and remind you, the fight is not over.

DAY OF MOURNING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): April 28 is the day that allows all Canadians and people throughout the world to pay respect to those working people who have died or suffered injuries and diseases on the job. This has been recognized for almost 10 years now as that particular day of mourning.

In Kapuskasing this morning a special ceremony was held to recognize and respect those workers and their families at 11 at the labour council monument in Riverside Park. Kapuskasing Labour Council covers the area from Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls and Cochrane, and they've been doing a very good job in

educating the workers in the dangers of being injured or killed on the job.

I want to send out congratulations to the new president of the labour council, Nicole Daggett, who has worked very hard on pulling together a number of the other unions to make sure that this continues to be a day of mourning for those who have been injured on the job.

Having worked in the paper mill at Spruce Falls for 21 years as a mechanic and eight years as an operator in the mill, I know the everyday dangers of trying to earn a living for your family and the risks involved in repairing machines or, as operators, making sure the machines run properly, so I just want to say that we should all take a moment's silence for today, April 28.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): This morning, Ontario's first restructuring commissioner announced the creation of a single municipality which includes the county of Kent and the city of Chatham. On January 1, 1998, the new municipality of Chatham-Kent will have a population of around 110,000 people and geographically will become the largest municipality in southwestern Ontario.

The new municipal government will be made up of 17 councillors and a mayor, replacing the current 141 politicians. This new government structure will provide the vehicle for more efficient delivery of government services, reduce costs to taxpayers, and make Chatham-Kent more competitive in the global marketplace.

Residents of the existing 23 municipalities should be assured that their individual sense of community and their particular culture can be retained, and should even flourish, within this new central government structure. The creation of this municipality will be of benefit to all its citizens by providing a more mature provincial-municipal relationship and a strong, self-reliant local government.

A transition team has been established to ensure a smooth and effective transfer to the new system of governance, and I want to wish them well and offer my services as they begin the task of leading the great new municipality of Chatham-Kent towards the 21st century.

1340

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I would like to remind the government and the Minister of Transportation today of the conditions of our roads. This is due to the many cuts which the government is applying in many areas. I'm not solely mentioning the hospital cuts or cuts to education; I'm mentioning the cuts to transportation services, those programs that are vital to the maintenance of our

roads. I would like to remind the Minister of Transportation that our potholes are getting larger and wider and the road conditions very unsafe.

I mention to the minister and the government that downloading is not the answer, privatization is not the answer. Those are services that this government should take into consideration now and make the roads safe so that drivers don't have to skirt the potholes and cause more incidents.

I call on the government and on the minister to provide the necessary funding to repair the roads. There are many projects which have been approved five, six or seven years ago and today they still remain undone because of the cuts. Now the situation is even worse, and I would call on the government to provide the funding and make our roads safe and secure for people throughout the province, not only here in Metro. The longer we wait, the more it's going to cost, so I would implore the government to really fund those projects that have been approved so our roads can be again safe and secure.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Normally about this time each year the minister responsible for women's issues marches into the House to proclaim May Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Today the Coalition in Defence of Women's Anti-Violence Services demanded that the minister back up her rhetoric with — get this — some actual measures to safeguard women in this province from sexual assault and spousal abuse.

I can't say it better than Anne-Marie Aikins of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, who says, "We are all too aware at this time of the unspeakable violence many women are facing in Ontario, but we see little action to increase government support for independent women's groups who have struggled to intervene."

The coalition is asking that the minister announce three things:

(1) Guarantee annualized funding for rape crisis centres and guarantee that rape crisis centres and sexual assault treatment centres not be amalgamated.

(2) The government formally reject the McGuire report, which recommended, among other things, shorter stays at transition houses.

(3) Additional funding for a diversity of independent women's anti-violence services in the upcoming May budget.

There's your challenge, Minister, and your chance to finally be an advocate for women in Ontario. To the minister responsible for women's issues, I look forward in anticipation to that announcement coming later this week.

MUNICIPAL ENUMERATION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): In my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay and all over Ontario, eligible voters are being invited to get on the list for this year's municipal and school board elections. As I speak, over five million households in Ontario are receiving in the mail their 1997 municipal enumeration forms.

Every three years the province conducts a municipal enumeration in preparation for the autumn municipal and

school board elections. This information is used to produce a preliminary list of electors for every municipal electoral district in Ontario. The information indicates a resident's school support and is also used to update the Ontario population report, provincial jurors' lists and property assessment records.

This year, part of the enumeration process has been contracted to the private sector. This one-time outsourcing will save the citizens of Ontario approximately \$2 million and allow assessment staff to remain focused on the province-wide reassessment project. Provincial government staff continue to be responsible for preparing the preliminary list of electors and other statutory reports.

I am sure that my constituents will be pleased to find the 1997 enumeration has been simplified and made more efficient. Enumerators will not be troubling people by going door-to-door. When recipients receive their municipal election and school board support form in the mail, they should review the information, make any necessary corrections, and then drop it back in the mail by May 9, even if there are no changes.

I encourage every eligible voter in Ontario to get on the list for this year's municipal and school board elections.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Already reeling from the proposed implementation of a disastrous change in assessment of cottage wineries by the Harris government, people in the grape and wine industry will not welcome the news that the Conservative regime has taken another step towards widespread privatization of services for the people of the province, including the possible privatization of the LCBO.

With the reality of the impact of the Canada-US free trade agreement and the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the grape growers and wine producers of Niagara and southwestern Ontario need the LCBO more than ever to allow fair promotion of our product in their stores across Ontario, particularly when our wine faces stiff and often unfair competition from offshore producers.

The total sales value of wine from Ontario is \$257 million. For every \$10 million in wine sales, there's \$14.8 million in economic activity in Ontario, according to a Deloitte and Touche study. Total wine industry related employment is 4,000; the value of grape purchases in 1996, \$20 million; acreage for grapes in Ontario, 18,000; 200,000 visitors attracted to the Niagara wine region during special summer events.

There are dozens of reasons not to privatize the LCBO, and the future of our grape and wine industry, in which the government of Ontario in the 1980s invested tens of millions of dollars, is one of the most important.

DAY OF MOURNING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Today of course is the international day of mourning for workers injured or killed in the workplace. I have joined with a number of other people in Hamilton at the monument we have at city hall. Later on today we will, before question

period, give unanimous consent for representatives from each party to address this issue and to pay our respects to those who have fallen on the job. It's the tradition of this place that we are not partisan at that time, that we speak to the issue.

The same is not the case, however, for members' statements, and I want to say to the government very directly that the workers I was with this morning — and it's interesting; there wasn't a single Tory representative there — know what this government's all about. They ought to hang their head in shames. On this international day of mourning, you have to answer for attacking and gutting the WCB, for killing the Occupational Health and Safety Act, for closing down the occupational health and safety agency, for gutting the Employment Standards Act, for gutting the Ontario Labour Relations Act. That's the track record that you've got on workers' issues, and they didn't forget. Every speaker this morning talked about this government's anti-worker agenda. You should be hanging your heads in shame. That's why the local Tories didn't come: They were too ashamed to try and be there and defend your record. We will continue to fight for those workers even if you ignore them.

GEORGE JOHNSTON

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I rise today to ask members to join with me in thanking Sergeant George Johnston of the Ontario Government Protective Service for his hard work and commitment to the people of Ontario and Canada. We wish him well on the occasion of his retirement.

Sergeant Johnston served his country for 22 years in the armed forces, with tours of duty in Vietnam, Germany and Cyprus. He then went on to serve in the Ontario Government Protective Service for 24 years.

We all know the difficult job that those who provide Ontario government security in this place and elsewhere must do. It requires great sensitivity to balance appropriate security with the need for openness and accessibility. Sergeant Johnston and his colleagues have done an excellent job in this regard over the years and in so doing have made an important contribution to the functioning of democracy in this province.

Sergeant Johnston has set an example of public service that is an inspiration to all. I know all members will join with me in congratulating him on a job well done and in offering our best wishes for the future.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Our government was elected with a mandate to make government work better for the people it serves. That objective may sound like a simple one, but it has required a commitment to completely re-examine the way in which government does business, and the

political courage to change the way things have been done in the past.

Since we assumed office we have accomplished long-overdue changes never even attempted by previous governments, and along the way we have learned that change is never easy. In addition, quite frankly, we have learned other lessons as well. We have learned that you can never have too much public input, that better decisions are made when the advice of experts is taken into account, and that everyone benefits from an open process when plans and proposals of government are made public and made clear.

Now we are preparing to apply those lessons as we fulfil yet another commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution. We are taking the next step in a fundamental and long-overdue review of the businesses owned and operated by the government.

Our government over the years has grown in size — in the past 20 years from a budget of less than \$6 billion to well in excess of \$40 billion today — and so have the number and types of businesses and services that have been provided by government. At the time these businesses were established, there were probably good reasons for government to be involved. However, in many cases those reasons no longer exist, because times change and so indeed have the needs of the people of Ontario. Today people have different expectations of their government.

We owe it to Ontarians to review where, why and how they are provided with public services. They must also have confidence that government is using their hard-earned tax dollars for services they need and value.

It may be that today there is no longer a need for government to be directly involved in a particular business, or it may be that government can now work with the private sector in operating that business more effectively, efficiently and at less cost, or it may be that having government keep and operate the business is still the best idea.

However, we cannot know what is best unless we conduct a careful, step-by-step review of these business operations. Therefore, we have designed a framework for privatization review, a careful, case-by-case evaluation of the businesses that are candidates for change.

That review process will be fair, open and prudent. It will include extensive input from the general public and from the government employees of each affected business. We will also draw upon the expertise of outside advisers who will be chosen through a competitive process and from a panel of experts who will assist me. Ontarians can have full confidence that their ideas and recommendations will be heard and that the best possible decisions will be made.

In evaluating specific candidates, we will look at a wide range of options, including different forms of public-private partnerships, joint ventures, long-term leasing, not-for-profit corporations, divestiture of assets, and having government retain the business and improving the services and operations.

The financial dividend obtained from whatever option is ultimately selected will go directly to paying down the provincial debt, just as we promised in the Common

Sense Revolution. This will free up resources which can be reinvested in priority areas such as health care, class-room education and community safety.

Today, in addition to setting out the privatization review framework, I am pleased to announce the first review candidates. They are the Province of Ontario Savings Office, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the Ortech research facility, and three government-owned and operated tree nurseries. I can assure you that in the very near future we will be looking at a significant number of other government services and businesses as well.

We are beginning a careful review of the government's business assets and the best way to use them on behalf of Ontarians. I am confident that this framework will provide a fair and open review of government businesses, thereby making a true contribution to our goal of making government work better for all Ontarians.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'll partially respond, and then my colleague Mr Kwinter will respond in more detail. Just to say on behalf of our caucus that this area has, we think, the potential for some serious problems. We understand the government is proceeding with it and we understand that it is broadly accepted across the country, but we want to begin to indicate some of the concerns so that the government will at least be aware of our apprehension about some aspects of it.

First, the biggest area of potential concern here, we are frightened, could be the health care sector. I just want to alert the government that we are extremely worried about that. You have decided to download onto our municipalities all of the responsibility for ambulances. People across this province should recognize that you now have to pay for ambulance services, or you will very shortly, off property taxes. That's our first concern, and we'll be watching the whole health sector very carefully as the government proceeds on its privatization.

The second thing is to recognize that much of the capital projects will now be funded through the private sector and leased by the government. Again, we worry about that because simply adding debt in a different way is still adding debt. Rather than paying for the debt through interest cost, we're paying through lease cost. So we worry about that.

The third thing is, there's no question that there are hundreds of companies out there just dying to get at this business, and what the government does, to use the jargon, is to sell off a stream of revenue. I will just say that the 407 is an example where the private sector was involved and so far, there are some concerns about it. So far, we are adding about \$1 million a day to our debt on it. There hasn't been a single penny raised yet on tolls, although that was promised at the end of December, and so far, we're losing, I believe, about \$1 million a week in revenue.

For all of those reasons, I just want to alert the government that this area has the potential for some significant problems for the public of Ontario and we'll be watching carefully.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I just want to follow up on my colleague and the concerns that I have: There is no question that there are probably areas where

public-private partnership makes some sense. But, you know, right from the very beginning we have a situation where the government announces that they've appointed a coordinator. They're paying him \$245,000, the highest-paid civil servant in Ontario. If you've got somebody who's getting that kind of a salary, surely his role is to make sure he justifies it, which means he sells off everything that he can possibly find.

What you have is the minister's statement, and it's interesting to say that people have different expectations of government. My concern is, whose expectations are they going to be looking at? Are they going to be looking at a very, very narrow expectation of their particular supporters, or are they looking at the expectations of the people of Ontario who demand a certain amount of service from this government, things that money cannot buy, but it's the role of the government to provide it?

We have a whole range of things that are on the so-called chopping block: our drinking water, our ambulance service, the Niagara Parks Commission, Old Fort Henry, TVOntario, Ontario Hydro, the LCBO, and anything else. You know, there's a maxim: If it isn't broken, don't fix it. My concern is we've already seen a government that has a history of deciding that things that have been working very, very well and have been acclaimed worldwide are suddenly deemed to be broken. They've gone out and without any consultation, without any contemplation and without any discussion, have changed it.

I want to make sure that that doesn't happen to some of the things that have made Ontario and made this jurisdiction one of the most attractive in the world. This can only happen if there truly is public input, public consultation. We have a situation where the minister has already identified four candidates, one of them being the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre. Again, I would caution this government and this minister that that was paid for out of public tax dollars. I have no problem with looking at doing something with it as long as it's not a fire sale, as long as someone is not going to come in, get a sweetheart deal and walk away with an asset that has been paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, without any reasonable return.

This is the case in every other thing that they are looking at. We have to make sure that the process is open. We have to make sure that there is no conflict of interest. We have to make sure that there is transparency and, above all, we have to make sure that those people who are going to be impacted and affected by it are treated fairly and that anything that does take place is truly open to public scrutiny and debate before that decision is made.

1400

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): First, I'd like to say to the minister that there's a shocking lack of detail before us today, and I hope that this so-called Ontario privatization review framework is not all there is. I would ask the minister that he table with the Legislature today some more background material so that we have more of an idea of how this government is going about looking at this great undertaking.

I note that the minister's words were nice. He says that they're going to start talking to workers here. I note that

postal workers, for instance, and some of the security workers have been trying to talk to the government for some time about their concerns about privatization. Some of the disabled we have working in both these areas are very, very concerned that their programs are going to disappear, and nobody's listening.

I also would like to note that this government has already started backdoor privatization. We've seen that with certain aspects of health care; ambulance services; in my area, the environment area, water privatization, which we're very worried about. We're starting the clause-by-clause this week of the beginning of the end of public ownership of water in Ontario.

For instance, one of the four areas mentioned today, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, I echo my Liberal colleague's concerns about that. Why would the private sector even invest unless it knows there's a huge profit to be made? It was we, the people of Ontario, who made that huge investment, with every reason to believe that there's a good return for us, for the people of Ontario. I hope the government takes a very good look at that before moving ahead.

I would also say to the minister that I'm sure he did not mean to be a stand-up comedian today, but when he talked in his statement about consulting with the public and what they have to say is very important and they will listen, that was such a joke after what we went through with Bill 103 and Bill 104, where we had thousands and thousands of people object to what you were doing and saying, "No, no, don't do it this way," and you didn't listen. You rammed it through. You went right ahead with it. That is a joke. You haven't learned a thing. The minister said today that they've learned some lessons. You haven't demonstrated that yet.

I would say seriously to the minister that what you're about to undertake here is a huge change in the way we do business and the way we protect and invest for the people of Ontario, and that you should back up the fine words that you used today and make sure you consult and listen to the people of Ontario before you move forward in any of these initiatives.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The minister in his comments said that the people of Ontario today have different expectations. Surely they have the expectation, as they always have had, that the government will carry out its role to conserve and protect our natural resources and to manage them well. It is most unfortunate that this government has laid off so many people in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Environment and Energy that it cannot monitor what the private sector is now doing, and now we're talking about giving over more of the management of these resources and the regeneration of our forests to the private sector.

Also, the government has stated clearly, despite the minister's words that he is going to consult with workers, that workers in these nurseries cannot bid to take over the nurseries and to operate them because the government considers that a conflict of interest. If the minister is shaking his head, then I'd like him to explain why this was done by his colleague the Minister of Natural Resources with a number of other nurseries.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): There's one thing worse than losing your job and that's to be left twisting in the wind. Your government last week was in Sault Ste Marie talking to the employees of the Ontario Lottery Corp, giving them their options and counselling them re the privatization of that very profitable corporation, and it isn't mentioned in here; it's not mentioned once. But I guess maybe we can ask, now that it's not mentioned, that you can rethink that.

Why don't you go to the people looking at the lottery corporation for privatization and tell them that it's a stupid idea? Give Sault Ste Marie back its future. This is a very profitable corporation that is working efficiently and has contributed to the life of my city in a very meaningful way. It was a sign of the future when it was opened in 1992. Today, Minister, under your leadership it is becoming a museum. Why don't you narrow-minded, ideologically driven bunch of carpetbaggers leave my city alone?

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): In the members' east gallery we have with us today the Minister of Health for Alberta, Mr Halvar C. Jonson. Welcome, sir.

LEGISLATIVE EVACUATION PLAN

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further, you'll note on your desks today, because of the fine work of the member for Mississauga South, you've been supplied with an evacuation plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's a fire exit route. I can't resist this, but you will note that should there be a fire, you exit through those doors, those doors or those doors. Whatever you do, don't check under your seats.

It's now time for oral questions.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent to recognize this day of mourning.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Member for Ottawa Centre.

DAY OF MOURNING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Today I rise in recognition and observance of this day of mourning for persons killed or injured in the workplace.

Canadian federal legislation designating a day of mourning to remember workers who have been killed, disabled or injured in the workplace and also workers afflicted with industrial disease received royal assent on February 1, 1991. Today, April 28, has particular significance since it is the anniversary of the day in 1914 when Canada's first workers' compensation legislation was passed in Ontario.

Last year 216 Ontarians lost their lives in the course of doing their jobs, and workplace injuries and illnesses accounted for millions in compensation claims. Although this figure is down from 233 in 1995, 244 in 1994 and 264 in 1993, we cannot rest until all tragedies are eliminated — tragedies such as the death of Benoît Blanchet

last week near my home community. The 29-year-old man was electrocuted after the boom crane he was operating to unload shingles off a flatbed trailer became entangled with hydro wires. Earlier this month a 25-year-old miner, Terry Fairservice, was killed in a tragic accident when he was trapped in a rock slide in Schreiber, east of Thunder Bay, on the north shore of Lake Superior.

Deaths in Canada from traumatic injuries in the workplace are approximately 1,000 every year. This national figure does not include deaths which occur from industrial diseases. If this were done, the figure would jump significantly. The number of casualties at the moment is dropping, but with all statistics we must be cautious in how we interpret that. Are they dropping because they are doing a better job in terms of accident and injury prevention or because of the general drop in employment, particularly in those sectors such as construction and mining, logging and heavy industries where injuries and accidents have disproportionately taken place?

The quality of worker health and safety means healthier families and healthier communities. Employers and employees alike must ensure that proper health and safety programs are in place. When the people who are responsible do not take these matters seriously and do not act on health and safety issues, people can and do die, as we saw recently through the public inquiry into the Westray mine disaster in Nova Scotia.

The threat of job loss, coupled with privatization, restructuring and layoffs, has contributed towards the continuation of unsafe conditions in some workplaces. No one should be reluctant to speak out against unsafe conditions at a work site for fear of losing their jobs. On this day of mourning, I would like to underscore the need for employers and employees to work together to prevent workplace injuries and illness. All of us in our party join with our colleagues in the Legislature and our constituents in our communities all over Ontario as we observe a moment of silence and pay tribute to those who have died. We especially pay tribute to their loved ones, their spouses, children, parents, colleagues and friends, who are living without them.

1410

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I am proud and pleased to rise on behalf of my NDP colleagues to join in with members of this House in paying tribute to the day of mourning and recognizing and remembering those workers who have died or been injured on the job. The slogan of the day of mourning is, "Mourn the dead and fight for the living," and at this time it's traditional that all parties would commit themselves to this important goal.

I'd like to point out that there's a myth in this province that more workdays are lost because of labour disputes, whether they're strikes or lockouts, and that this is a primary concern in terms of production in the economy and therefore is the biggest issue to be faced in terms of time off the job. The reality is that last year there were 500,000 more workdays lost because of injury, illness and disease than any strikes or lockouts. That was in a year that we also had an extraordinarily high number of people

on strike, as we recall the OPSEU strike and the CAW workers at GM. In 1995, when we don't have those figures to calculate, we find that the number of workdays lost because of injury, illness and disease over strikes or lockouts is six times. In fact, last year there were 204 deaths and nearly 350,000 total claims. That does not include the nearly 6,000 workers who die from occupational disease. If that happened as one incident, we would declare a national emergency, so it's important that on this day we take time to remember and we take time to commit ourselves to making our workplaces as safe as they can be.

We recognize this day here in Ontario because it reflects the enactment of the first workers' compensation board act in Ontario, April 28, 1914, and it was Bob Rae, the former Premier of Ontario, who in 1988 introduced a resolution that was passed unanimously by the House that this Legislature would recognize a day of mourning.

On Friday in Hamilton I was at a news conference with Steelworkers who have committed themselves to a public campaign on educating young workers, particularly students who take on summer employment, in terms of their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, in an effort to prevent our young people from being injured, because just like unemployment, their injury rates are higher than the numbers for the balance of the population that is working. They're going right into the high schools, and I think we ought to recognize that the unions are playing the lead role in making sure that health and safety are a priority. I applaud them for going into those schools and talking to those young people about their rights and making sure their young lives are not ended as young lives, as happens far too often.

This morning I was at the monument that we have at city hall, the first city in the history of Canada to allow a monument on city hall property, and I was so proud to be a member of the council that made that decision. It sits right at Bay Street and Main Street, and every year we gather, as we did this morning at 10:30, to pay tribute to those who die or are injured or acquire fatal diseases on the job.

Greater workplace safety is achieved through workers being trained properly, and greater workplace safety is also achieved by following the basic principles of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The right to know about unsafe hazards in the workplace, the right to participate in decisions about health and safety in the workplace and, most importantly, the right of a worker to refuse unsafe work: That is how we make our workplaces as safe as they can be.

I close by, again on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, joining with all members of this House in recognizing the contribution workers make to the economy of this province, paying special tribute to those who have died on the job and recommitting ourselves to truly making our workplaces as safe as they can humanly be.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): As has been mentioned, today is the national day of mourning. Today we have the opportunity to remember the many workers who have suffered injury or illness or lost their lives while on the job.

Today is a day when we are all reminded, and certainly examples have been given to us, of the terrible human, social and economic toll that workplace illnesses, injuries and fatalities can take. Today we join with workers, employers and others to express our sincere condolences to the families and to the friends of those killed or injured at the workplace.

Today also provides us as legislators an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to the prevention of illness and injury and zero tolerance for fatalities, for health and safety is not a partisan issue but a human issue.

As we take a look at how we can truly make a difference in working towards the elimination of illness, injury and fatalities in the workplace, it is becoming abundantly clear that workplace partnerships and coordination are critical to developing and delivering health and safety programs that will enable us to achieve that goal. In recent months we are starting to see some of these partnerships and this coordination developing.

I want to congratulate those labour unions, specifically the Steelworkers, who are going into our schools. I want to congratulate the employers and the other organizations and individuals who are starting to focus on the need for education in the area of health and safety and on the need to focus on prevention of illness, injury and fatalities first and foremost.

I want to congratulate particularly the Safe Communities Foundation, as they celebrate their first anniversary, for the work they are doing with people in our communities to help us achieve our goals of safe communities.

I want to congratulate the Industrial Accident Prevention Association and the workers' centre for delivering the young workers' awareness program in our schools. They are going into our schools to educate our young people and raise awareness of the need to be able to identify workplace hazards, and they are teaching our young people not only about their rights but also about their responsibilities.

We are only going to be able to make a difference by continuing to work together collaboratively and by making sure that we not only raise the awareness of each and every individual; we need to make sure that communities become aware of the need to work cooperatively together to ensure they have safe workplaces. It's also important that each CEO of each company make a commitment to health and safety in order that each member within the organization will share in that commitment.

However, regardless of what has already been done, much more remains to be done in the future if we are to make the workplaces in this province among the safest in the world. Today we as legislators have the opportunity to renew our dedication to the task of eliminating future death, injury and illness. One death or one injury will always be one too many.

At this time I would ask everyone to stand for a moment of silence to remember not only those who have suffered injury, disease or lost their lives, but also to remember the families who have been so greatly impacted.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1420

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: My question about the emergency taking place in this chamber was a very serious question and it was very seriously asked. I'm disappointed that I would receive a map or a drawing showing the existing exits to this place, because everyone who comes in and out of this chamber knows very well where our exits are. I'm probably a little insulted that this is the response, Mr Speaker. What I wanted to ask you was if you would give us —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Mississauga South, this isn't a point of privilege.

Mrs Marland: Well, how do I —

The Speaker: I suggest you call me. We could take it up privately, but it's not a point of privilege for the House.

Time for — sorry?

Mrs Marland: With respect, you made an announcement in the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the minister responsible for privatization. Minister, this morning you released your framework for privatization. It was completely without substance or definition. You offered us vague guidelines and even vaguer assurances that the friends of this government won't be the ones to profit. We already see them lining up at the trough, just as they did under Margaret Thatcher in England and Brian Mulroney in this country. We get the distinct impression that everything is on the table, that nothing is sacred, that Ontario is up for sale.

Minister, you talk about selling and divesting. Will you guarantee us today that you will not sell our natural resources, our cultural, heritage, historical or religious sites and areas in which taxpayers have made significant investments?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I can tell the member opposite that the process we've outlined is indeed a process that has resulted from some work we took and some consultation we had with other jurisdictions that have gone through an exercise of privatization. We looked at those jurisdictions because we wanted to make sure we designed a system here in Ontario that suited Ontarians' needs and didn't duplicate the errors and omissions other jurisdictions had in their process. I think we've done that with this process. This is a fair and open process to deal with the challenge we have in government in making sure government businesses keep up with the times.

Mr Cordiano: Minister, come on. Come clean with us. You're trying to hide your plans for privatization by citing examples like selling off convention centres and tree nurseries.

If you refuse to tell us where you'll draw the line in terms of privatization, then we'll give you a start. Take the Niagara Parks Commission off the table. Let's be clear about that. Some of us know that Disneyland wants to buy Niagara Falls and set up another theme park, the Disney Falls, to sell tickets to see the falls, the gorge, the Brock monument and military burial grounds.

Tell the people of Ontario today, Minister, is there a For Sale sign on Niagara Falls? Be clear about that. People in Ontario want to know. They have a right to be concerned. Is Niagara Falls up for sale, and is it going to Disney?

Hon Mr Sampson: What the people of Ontario want to know is that they have a role to play in this process. As I outlined in my speech today, in my delivery to this House today, it's quite clear from the process we've designed that there is indeed a role for Ontarians to play. We intend to have a full and open process so that people know how we are dealing with the particular challenges of making sure government is governing in the right areas, and second, that Ontarians can play that crucial and effective role.

Mr Cordiano: Disney isn't the only American company interested in scooping up treasured Ontario assets. Why don't you tell us, Minister, what else are you prepared to give away: the lottery corporation, the housing corporation, the LCBO, the clean water agency? By not telling us today what's off the table, you've just put one huge For Sale sign on Ontario. Everything's for sale. That's what you're telling people right across this province. The taxpayers have a right to know what's for sale and what's not, and you haven't come clean with that.

Will you take off the table what you are not prepared to sell? Come clean today and be clear about that, because the taxpayers have a right to know. Will you stand up and give us those assurances?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, what the people of Ontario have a right to in this province is a government that is delivering on the services they need and require in a fair, effective and efficient manner. They're looking to government to make sure that government businesses have kept pace with the times in this province. They do not want government businesses that do not deal with the challenges of the times as we have them now and as they will be going forward.

I can commit to the people of Ontario that we indeed intend to meet our obligations to Ontarians in governing this province seriously, so that we will address those businesses that need to be changed for the future of Ontario in a fair, effective and efficient manner which involves all Ontarians.

HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'd like to bring you to your feet to respond to concerns about the standard of your Health Services Restructuring Commission, the one going around the province closing hospitals.

On Thursday last you seemed to have a hard time explaining to us whether or not the commission is arm's

length from cabinet. When you started the commission, you said it was arm's length; when you hired people, you said it was arm's length; when you stand in this House to be accountable for this commission, you say it's arm's length.

At the same time, we have two letters from two different cabinet ministers, and I need you, Minister, as the person responsible, to tell us which is right. Is the minister responsible for francophone affairs correct when he says he is unable to intervene, that "Given that the commission is independent, it would be inappropriate for me to intervene directly," or is it the Minister of Municipal Affairs when he tells constituents that he has written to and received extensions on behalf of hospitals, one in his riding, for their sake? Tell us which it is. Is this commission indeed arm's length?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Yes.

Mr Kennedy: Your lack of interest in providing people with confidence leads us to wonder about the kind of double standard for your commission. Do you mean that people in your cabinet are also going to be talking to the securities commission, the Ontario Housing board? Where do you draw the line?

Minister, I want to know from you, are you aware today of contact being made by other members of your cabinet with the commission? Have you received copies of correspondence? The Minister of Municipal Affairs would not release copies of his letter to the media on Thursday last. You know this is a question of confidence in you and in your commission. As you're aware, the Environics poll released last week says that 66% of Ontarians are very concerned about what you're doing to hospitals, and they want you today to give them some assurance. Is your commission open to all kinds of political interference or are there some safeguards, and are you aware of what's going on within your own cabinet? Tell us today, Minister.

1430

Hon Mr Wilson: The only one who seems to be confused on this issue is the honourable member. The Members' Integrity Act, which you only quoted in part last week, clearly states that a member must not attempt to improperly further his own private interest or the private interest of another. Within these parameters, the act does not prohibit a member from engaging in normal duties on behalf of his or her constituents.

Mr Leach was contacting the commission for an extension of time so that his constituents could have a little more time to prepare their briefs. It's perfectly within the law, and in fact it's a sign of a good MPP.

Mr Kennedy: Well, I hate to tell you in front of your colleague from Alberta, from whom you take much direction, that this is not the sign of a good cabinet minister looking after the interests of the health of Ontarians, because it is not acceptable that cabinet ministers should interfere with commissions for which they have a say on who sits on those commissions. In endorsing that, you're going against the advice, which you are apparently prepared to ignore, on the part of the commissioner which says that you are prohibited, if you're in cabinet, from intervening with commissions.

Minister, we want to hear from you today. You told your local newspaper that the hospital in your home town of Alliston was in no danger of closing. You provided that assurance, and last week you gave an assurance to the people of Meaford on behalf of one of the other members from your side of the House that there would be good news coming for them.

How is it you are in a position to assure the people of your home town that your hospital will not close when you've supposedly given these powers at arm's length to the commission? Think carefully before you answer, because it's very important to the trust of the commission and to yourself that you establish that there's any arm's length at all on the part of this commission.

Hon Mr Wilson: The commission is at arm's length, unlike perhaps some other agencies, boards and commissions. Its final decisions remain at its table. They do not go to cabinet, so Mr Leach or any other cabinet minister does not have the opportunity to change or review decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The law that we put in in January to set up the commission very intentionally was set up to take the politics like this out of health care. That's why your government failed to do anything about health care restructuring and it's why the previous government couldn't go as far as I think they wanted to go with respect to reforming the health care system.

People are concerned about health care in this province, I can guarantee you that, because they're reminded again today, with a phoney announcement by the federal government, that we have been cut by \$2.1 billion in health and social transfers. That is a very powerful impetus for the health care people in this province to restructure the system, and that's what they're doing.

Secondly, the very quick answer to Simcoe county is that Simcoe county has already undergone a hospital restructuring. The previous government did that and then they flowed money to Orillia. The new hospital in Barrie is being built now, announced by the previous government, because of —

Interjection.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): That's not what you told the people of Alliston. It's not what you told them at home, Minister; it's not what you told people in Murdoch's riding.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Members for York South and Windsor-Sandwich, come to order, please. New question.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, the Workers' Compensation Act currently lists as one of its main goals "fair compensation for injured workers." Why are you taking out the word "fair"?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would respond to the member opposite that we have taken a look at the Workers' Compensation Act. As you know, we have rewritten the act and we are going to be calling it the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. In the course of making the changes, we will be ensuring that

the compensation that is provided will be fair. In fact, as you know, the compensation that is going to be provided is as generous as any that can be found in North America.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, you didn't answer the question, which is the track record with you. I asked you a very specific question, and in your answer again you used the word "fair." Yet you are not prepared to commit to leaving the word there. You're deliberately taking out the word "fair." We have consistently accused you of saying one thing here, nice words that make people feel good, but then you pass legislation that hurts people.

I ask you again: If you truly believe in fair compensation for injured workers, will you commit today to put the word "fair" back in the legislation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just indicate again that the changes we're making are totally refocusing the emphasis of the WCB. In fact what they're going to be doing is focusing on the prevention of illness and injury first and foremost, so we have rewritten our purpose clause totally and emphasized the need for healthy and safe workplaces. Our emphasis is no longer on compensation; it is on health and safety. I would also say to you that in the course of the deliberations, when this bill makes its way around the province, if indeed there are suggestions to change and to again include that word, that can certainly be considered in the course of the deliberations.

Mr Christopherson: I don't think anyone is fooled by those slippery answers. The fact is that you won't put the word "fair" back in because your new workers' compensation will not be fair for workers. You'll refocus all right — to take care of your friends.

The fact of the matter is, Minister, you've also used the excuse of the unfunded liability being in such a crisis that that's why you've had to take away billions from injured workers. The facts are that the unfunded liability has dropped, since our NDP legislation, the last three years in a row. It has dropped by over \$1 billion. Minister, will you admit today that you don't have any excuse to take money away from injured workers except that you have to pay for the \$6 billion you're giving back to your corporate friends in your new WCB legislation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just remind you that \$10.4 billion is still a very high unfunded liability. In fact, it is three times greater than the combined unfunded liability of all the other provinces in Canada.

Mr Christopherson: Three years in a row, \$1 billion.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Hamilton Centre, I ask you to come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: If we had not taken the action we are going to be taking and if we had not introduced Bill 15 and reorganized the WCB, as we've already done —

Mr Christopherson: That's not true. Tell the truth.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, I ask you to come to order and withdraw that comment.

Mr Christopherson: Speaker, I asked the minister to tell the truth.

The Speaker: I ask you to withdraw the comment or I'll have to name you.

Mr Christopherson: Speaker, I'm imploring the minister to tell the truth about this issue.

The Speaker: I name the member for Hamilton Centre, Mr Christopherson. I ask you to leave the assembly, please.

Mr Christopherson was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I was just going to indicate that unfortunately our unfunded liability at \$10.4 billion, which is showing some decline, is still three times greater than the total unfunded liability of all the other Canadian provinces. Without our reforms and certainly the action we're taking, the unfunded liability would have reached \$18 billion by the year 2014. So we are trying to restore the financial integrity of the board in order that benefits will be secure for injured —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

1440

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Attorney General, who was here a moment ago. I'll stand it down, I guess. Oh, here he is.

As the Attorney General returns to his seat, I would point out that whether or not there is a conviction in the case in Sarnia today, there has been no investigation of the role of the government in the Dudley George affair. The case before the courts will only deal with a half-hour of mayhem in the dark on September 6. Only part of the picture will be revealed by the results of the case.

The public deserves to know exactly who decided to deploy the large numbers of OPP in this matter. We know that meetings were held with political staff, including a personal assistant to the Premier. Why was there such a large buildup of force by the police if the only options the government was seriously contemplating, as the minister has said, were court injunctions or trespassing charges?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Wildman: These are serious questions that the government must have answered and they can only be answered by a public inquiry. Will the minister now, after this court case, agree to a full public inquiry into the Dudley George affair?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): There are a number of court cases that continue to go on, a number of them scheduled over the next couple of months. We have indicated very clearly to this Legislature that certainly it was the government's position to take steps to obtain a civil injunction. The government in fact did that and the record is clear that that is the approach the government took to end this incident peacefully. Quite separate from that, it has been made very clear in this Legislature that the Ontario Provincial Police had the discretion to deal with policing matters in the way they saw fit and received no political direction.

Mr Wildman: Unfortunately, that is anything but clear. The OPP has historically taken an approach of avoiding confrontation in these kinds of situations. I have a copy of a press release issued by the OPP on September 6 at 1:45 pm stating that "police will continue trying to establish a line of communication with the occupiers

in an effort to negotiate a successful resolution." Something happened between the time that press release was issued and the evening when the police buildup started. We know that later that day the special committee had a meeting. On the same day, we also know that Marcel Beaubien urged the government "not to back down" in the face of lawlessness: "If people are to be hurt, so be it."

The exact roles of the various people in these events that led to the fatal shooting of Dudley George are still unknown. I urge the minister, will he now agree to a full public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I've indicated earlier, there are a number of court cases that continue to go on. The issues in all of those cases are different. I only want to read what Commissioner O'Grady said in remarks that he put out. He was very clear. He said, "I do not take tactical or operational direction from the government." In fact, there was never any tactical or operational direction given, and certainly the government's position, as I indicated, was always to obtain a civil injunction and hopefully end this situation peacefully.

Mr Wildman: A public inquiry will deal with the chain of command, the decisions that were taken in response to the occupation at Ipperwash and what the role of the government was.

Obviously, the OPP doesn't take operational or tactical advice from the government. It does take policy advice and strategic advice, and that's what the meeting was about on September 6. It appears that some time between 1:45 pm on September 6 and later that day changes were made. At 6:42 pm the police log says, "Marcel Beaubien advised that he has sent a fax to the Premier advising of his intentions and that he wanted a return call regarding his intentions." What were those intentions? We must know what the government decided to do. We do know —

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Wildman: — that the policy direction appears to have been to get the expletive Indians out of the park as soon as possible, and the OPP decided how, not if. We need a public inquiry. We want to know —

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, please come to order.

Hon Mr Harnick: It's quite clear what the government direction was. The government direction was to obtain a civil injunction, and the record speaks for itself. That is absolutely clear, and the government immediately took steps to begin the preparation of materials. The materials were filed with the court. There was an attempt made to ensure that there was notice given about the intention to obtain the injunction. The record and the actions and the words in court make that abundantly clear and speak for themselves. The government's position was to try and end this occupation peacefully by obtaining a civil injunction.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Health. In Ontario today, if a person requires ambulance services, that individual can expect a

quality service and a copayment of not more than \$45. Your government is embarking upon significant changes to the delivery of ambulance services: the downloading of the cost of land ambulances to local government and, as we've been reading in the press lately, the significant incursion of major private operators like Rural/Metro and Laidlaw into the delivery of land ambulance services in Ontario.

Given all that, Minister, can you assure all Ontarians that as a result of these downloading and privatization initiatives every citizen in Ontario, regardless of where they live and regardless of their financial means, will have quality ambulance service with no more user charges than the current \$45 copayment?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I should mention that there are two copayments: one is \$45 for emergency transfers, one of the lowest in the country, and the other one is well over \$260 for non-emergency transfers. Let's make sure that people understand. Those copayments have been in place for many, many years in this province.

Standards will be in place. In fact, people are going to get better ambulance services. We put \$25 million into paramedic services; 99% of our ambulances by this time next year will have paramedic services. No other province in the country can brag about that. I'm going up this week, actually, to a native community to give out awards to their paramedics and to remind the public that we've reinvested some \$15 million into the medications that are now being carried by our ambulances for bee stings and asthma and other medications. Frankly, it has been so successful around the province that many people don't need the ride the rest of the way to the hospital because our ambulances are so good.

The standards will be there: 69 of 172 of our ambulances are already run —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Conway: My concern today is about accessibility and price to the patient. I want to be very clear, Minister, and let me repeat: Can you assure the people of Ontario today that regardless of whether you're a banker in Toronto, a logger in Renfrew or a farmer in West Simcoe, you will into the future have equal access to quality ambulance service; that there will not be any increase in their user fees beyond the emergency and non-emergency copayments we have today; and that people, particularly in rural and northern Ontario, will not face the kinds of user charges that Rural/Metro has been imposing in places like New York state where, for example, their charge for advanced life support is \$350 per delivery of service?

Hon Mr Wilson: No. We have no plans to introduce any new copayments. We said we wouldn't in the campaign and we won't. The NDP last raised the copayment by \$3 in 1993 and we're not even looking at that at this point. The standards will be in place: 69 of 172 ambulance services now are run by the private sector. In fact, of 172 ambulance services, the government only runs 10, so I think the honourable member is trying to fearmonger among the public.

The fact of the matter is that municipalities, the private sector, the ministry and a couple of other organizations run our ambulance services, and we have the highest standards and the best ambulances in this country. We wouldn't want to do anything at all to destabilize that. In fact, we've been putting more and more money in to make sure that we continue to provide even better service in the future.

1450

WATER AND SEWER SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, your government's announcement today on privatization is really about trying to mask your underlying bias in favour of privatization, and your ministry has been at the forefront of this backdoor privatization.

This week Bill 107, on water and sewer services, will be up for amendment in committee. Earlier at committee you said you weren't in favour of privatizing water and sewage, but because of your government's download, municipalities won't have the money to take care of our water properly. They will be forced to sell it off to the private sector and we could see the kind of water disasters we've seen in England. Minister, will you put your money where your mouth is? Will you amend this bill today so that municipalities will not be able to sell off our water?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Bill 107 has nothing to do with privatization. It has everything to do with turning over the deeds to the water and sewage plants, which many municipalities have already paid for in the past and quite frankly are demanding the deeds for, and we have no alternative legally but to turn over those deeds to them.

That's what Bill 107 is about. Bill 107 is about giving to municipalities their rightful assets, which they have paid for in the past. We're transferring, as you know, 25% of the plants in Ontario from the name of the crown of Ontario to their rightful owner, the municipalities. I think municipal governments have done a good job in terms of water and sewage treatment for the people of Ontario in the past and I trust them to do so in the future.

Ms Churley: Minister, this is not a situation where "Trust me" is good enough. We want an amendment to this bill that shuts out any possibility that a municipality that is strapped for cash can sell off the water. I am not talking about the operation here. If you mean what you say, you will amend the bill because right now, as it stands, they will be able to do that.

I also want to bring up with you today that you've already started privatizing our water without any public process. Last week the Environmental Commissioner slammed the government for privatizing water testing labs. She said that privatization may put our water in danger, and it's costing five times as much for the private sector to do it. This is an example of privatization that's gone terribly wrong. It is something that should make all Ontarians fearful about your whole privatization agenda. Minister, will you bring water testing labs back into the public sector so we can be confident our water is clean?

Hon Mr Sterling: Let me be clear about Bill 107. Bill 107, for the first time in this province, discourages privatization with regard to municipal water and sewage plants, something which your government quite frankly didn't have the guts or determination to do. We have said that if a municipality wants to sell a particular facility, it must return all the grant money this province gave to them since 1978. There has never been such a discouragement before to municipalities to undertake any kind of privatization.

All we are doing is transferring the deed to the rightful owner, to the people who have been taking care of their people over the past 100 years and providing water and sewage services. We believe in municipal autonomy. We believe the people of Ontario are well-served by their local governments. They have been trusted in the past to give their people good water and they will do so in the future. We believe in the municipalities of Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. I understand that last week, during Earth Week, you embarked on a trip to meet environmental officials of 11 neighbouring US states to promote clean air and water and cooperation among neighbouring jurisdictions in our fight to protect the environment. Could you please share with us some of the issues you discussed on your trip?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Last week I met with 11 different state directors, secretaries of environment and governors from across the midwest United States. It's important for us to have a close liaison with these particular governors and state governments because 50% of our ozone problem originates in the United States, and that is in the greater Toronto area; when you go down to Windsor, it's 90%. If we do not deal with these particular states, work with these states to reduce the amount of ozone they have in their area, we can't deal with our own problems. States like New York, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania receive the same kind of transborder pollution as we do. They understand our problem. They want to work with us to solve this problem and that's what we're going to do.

Mr Froese: As you know, my riding is St Catharines-Brock, and in the Niagara-on-the-Lake portion of the riding they border along the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. In addition to air management, did you discuss other issues which concern both Americans and Canadians along the river and Lake Ontario, and in particular, those people in St Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake? Did you discuss issues like how best to protect the Great Lakes?

Hon Mr Sterling: You can't meet with these particular individuals without talking about protecting the Great Lakes. It is a very important concern of theirs because they receive much of their water from those Great Lakes. When I met with people from Michigan, Ohio, New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, all the Great Lakes, they stated their concern over water quality. We have been meeting with them to improve the Great Lakes water quality, and I will work with them in the future.

I have been invited to go to the Great Lakes governors conference this July in Erie, Pennsylvania, to present our case. I would invite members like Mr Froese to go along with me, because of his concern over areas in the Niagara area.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sterling: While members of the opposition may treat this lightly, this is a serious problem. We are going to work together with these states to improve Great Lakes quality, and I believe together we can all have better quality water, both on Canada's side and the US side.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the minister for privatization. The LCBO employs about 5,000 people, transfers around \$700 million to the coffers of the province of Ontario, distributes alcohol in a responsible fashion by turning away tens of thousands of under-age individuals and ensures that there remains a public voice in the selling of alcoholic beverages. Will you assure this House, the employees of the LCBO and the people of Ontario that you will not privatize the Liquor Control Board of Ontario?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I refer the question to the minister responsible for that.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): We are currently taking steps to modernize the LCBO, as the honourable member knows, with the goals of better customer service, improved efficiencies, and strong health and social standards. We have been taking suggestions on how to improve the system and modernize it further from many of our stakeholders. Certainly we've had discussions with the OLBEU employees as well. Our goal simply is to make the system better for the consumer and better for the taxpayer of Ontario.

Mr Crozier: We're still not sure who's in charge. Can you privatize if only the minister lets you privatize, or does the privatization minister come in and tell you who he's going to privatize? We'll find that out later.

The Premier said last Wednesday on a CBC open-line program that we would never give up regulation of alcohol or control of alcohol. We know that 71% of the people of Ontario are opposed to the privatization of the LCBO and we feel you should heed those words.

1500

You've said you want to improve the marketing etc of the LCBO and you said you've talked to stakeholders. Since last December you've had a document called Home Grown Solutions. I know the minister must have read it by now. If you have read this report, are you acting on any of its recommendations that have been given to you by the employees of the LCBO?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Yes, I have had an opportunity to see the document from the OLBEU employees. They have made a number of, I think, very reasonable suggestions to us. We have looked further in terms of some of the kiosk suggestions they've made. We certainly have a very successful kiosk operation right now, to the honour-

able member, in Markham which services the Chinese population of my particular riding.

Our commitment has been to modernize the LCBO. We are continuing to do that. Certainly we are making specific reference to, once again, the interests of the consumer in this province; we're making reference to the interests of the taxpayer in this province. They must be better systems.

Certainly we have to pay attention to the special place the wine industry has and serves in Ontario and the employment opportunities that come of it.

Taking into account what we're doing, we are continuing to modernize right now. We are listening to suggestions as to how to improve the system.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, there are some people in Sault Ste Marie who think you are planning to get out of the advocacy-for-vulnerable-adults business and that the first step is the amalgamation of the adult protective service worker program with Community Living Algoma. Do you think it's appropriate that advocates for vulnerable people be employees of the organization delivering the services to this targeted group?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm not aware of plans for the amalgamation as he has described it. I will certainly be prepared to look into it.

Mr Martin: That certainly is good news and will be good news both for the people who are being advocated on behalf of and for the people delivering the service, who are very concerned about this move. Right now adult protective service workers provide advocacy for a large number of people in Sault Ste Marie and Algoma. When the amalgamation happens, their services will only be available to clients of Community Living Algoma. The question that would flow from that obviously would be: If in fact this amalgamation takes place, where would those vulnerable adults get the support they need?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Many associations and organizations in communities are conducting their own restructuring initiatives, where they're trying to share resources to try to do a better job. As I've said to the honourable member, I will certainly look into this situation, because we want to make sure that vulnerable adults are not harmed in any move if there is indeed a move going on in this community.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you're aware, Bill 98, the Development Charges Act, begins clause-by-clause today after extensive committee hearings. Could the minister please inform the House how the government has responded to the deputations and written submissions received during the committee process?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member from Scarborough for his question. As he knows, the development charges review has taken well over a year to put in place. We put a position paper out and left it out on the street for a year for the municipalities, the developers and the public to comment on. We then put the legislation together and, as you know, it has gone through this legislative process. It has gone through second reading, where again we listened to the numerous deputants, particularly from the development industry and from the municipalities.

As a result of those deputations, we've had an opportunity to refine the bill. The municipalities want growth to pay for growth, and we agree with that. The development industry wants to make sure that the cost of their product isn't put out of the reach of new home buyers. We believe we've reached a compromise that everyone will be able to live with: 100% of hard services will be paid for by the development; the services that serve the whole community, like city halls, museums and art galleries, will not be subject to development charges at all.

Mr Newman: I thank the minister for clarifying the amendments for the House. Could he please inform the House of how this legislation will help both the municipal sector and the development industry sector?

Hon Mr Leach: Again I thank the member for the question. I think everybody realizes that growth should pay for growth. If there is new development taking place, the burden of providing that new development shouldn't rest on the existing taxpayer, so the development industry should be and is prepared to pay 100% of the cost of hard services that they require for their development. They had difficulties in accepting that they should pay for museums and city halls, and our legislation will ensure that they no longer have to do that.

We also have an agreement in introducing an amendment that would allow a 10% discount on services such as arenas, transit and other services that are required for development and are required for the municipalities but should be shared by everyone.

HIGHWAY SIGNS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question to the Minister of Transportation. In light of your colleague's announcement today about the framework for privatization, we thought we'd review with you an issue that's involved privatization already: principally the privatization of highway signs in Ontario.

I wonder if you could outline for me what in your view have been some of the benefits and where the status of that project is today.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Although the privatization of the signs comes under economic development, I'll certainly try and give the member whatever I can as far as an explanation. I feel it's an opportunity for businesses within the province and I think it's a step in the right direction. It's also going to bring on economic growth within that particular region, so I know economic development and MTO have worked together with the privatization people who are delivering

that service and we're looking forward to expanding it even more.

Mr Duncan: In fact what is happening, and we think this is a perfect example of the Harris government's privatization initiatives, you have an American-controlled company that today in eastern Ontario is taking down perfectly good signs that were erected three years ago, highway signs, and then charging organizations like the Raisin River Conservation Area to have access to highway signs.

So what do we have? We have a situation in eastern Ontario, the test pilot in 1994, where all-new signs are replacing perfectly good signs, the costs are being downloaded to the local conservation authority, a conservation authority that has had a 70% cut in its budget, and the profits from this arrangement are going to an American-controlled company.

Can the minister tell us, will there be an opportunity to keep those perfectly good signs on the highway, signs that stretch from Brockville to the Quebec border, at least until such time as their useful life has been expended?

Hon Mr Palladini: I really don't share the same concern that the honourable member has mentioned. As far as the actual company that's delivering the services from a head office, so to speak, yes, it is American-owned, but the services are being delivered by Canadians, by people who work here in Ontario. I really want to assure the member that this sensitivity is certainly very much there.

As far as the honourable member's saying that we are wasting money because the signs we are taking up are still good, I agree, they are still good, but they're not giving the message that we want. That is the reason we've gone to the new text sign, where you're going to have visibility of actually seeing exactly what is available to the tourists, where they can get out, how far it is and so on. I believe we are taking a step in the right direction and I certainly would like to see a lot more of this and actually encourage businesses in Ontario to come forward and see how we can help them improve their businesses.

HEALTH CARDS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Health. With us today in the gallery is Mrs Maria Izzo. She's sitting in the members' gallery with her husband, Tommaso. She's here because her purse was stolen about a month ago, and with it her health card. The problem we want to bring to your attention is the fact that Mrs Izzo cannot get your ministry to issue her a replacement card.

Minister, you should know that Mrs Izzo has lived in Canada for about 38 years, a long-time resident, she has her passport documents, complete with a landed immigrant stamp, she has a driver's licence, a social insurance card, she's a CPP recipient, she has a statement from her doctor verifying her health number, and still your ministry will not issue her a replacement card.

In fact, her card was stolen. She reported the theft and your ministry refuses to accept her documents, claiming that what she needs instead is to provide a copy of the original stamp that was put on her passport, even though

the information from that was translated into her current passport. The other side of the coin is that the current card is still in circulation. Minister, why does your ministry continue to operate in this way and deny Mrs Izzo a replacement card?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It's a good question the honourable member has brought forward and I'd be happy to look into the situation immediately. The rules with regard to eligibility and getting the card are the same ones your government put in place a few years ago. It sounds ridiculous, and I'll get to the bottom of it right away.

1510

Mr Silipo: I appreciate that, Minister, and you're right that there were some rule changes that were made at the time that we were the government to try and deal with the question of eliminating fraudulent attempts to get into the cards. You yourself I think will recall that. In fact, I remember you making statements in this House to the effect that you believed that OHIP fraud amounted to some hundreds of millions of dollars. I think you said in fact it was a \$691-million problem.

Yet with the strong conviction that you had, your first act as Minister of Health was to cancel the health card program that we had put in place. Now we have this kind of problem because you've cut staff, you've closed administrative offices and your ministry can't keep track, it seems, of the health cards in circulation. I guess the question to you again, Minister — and I appreciate your commitment to look into this — is, will you also take a look at the fact that there's a replacement card —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member is in error in some of the assumptions he has made about how perfect their re-registration system was. They were going to re-register the province and compare it to a database that still had dogs and cats on it, because the Liberals give us blank forms to fill out in the 1980s and some people, as a joke, put down children and the family pet, and the Liberal government sent them all out red and white health cards just before the election campaign in the mid-1980s, I recall.

The fact of the matter is, your constituents don't have to come down here. You could have called me and brought this to my attention. Everything that's brought to the floor here we get solved right away. It's the same bureaucrats who worked under you, and I'm sure they're not trying to mess people around intentionally. They're trying to do a big job in the second-largest health care system in the world with thousands and thousands of registrations every day. Every time we hear a problem like this, we're able to solve it, so we'll solve this one right away.

We have taken a number of other measures — if I had more time — to ensure that fraud is —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

WETLANDS

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. All of us in this

House, and especially those of us from the great rural areas of our province like Chatham-Kent, are aware of the great work done by Ducks Unlimited to promote the preservation and growth of wetlands. I understand that last Wednesday you were in Long Point Bay and signed an important agreement with the folks at Ducks Unlimited. Could you elaborate on the terms of that agreement for us, please?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for Chatham-Kent for the question. I was honoured last week, as he mentioned, to be in Long Point Bay to sign this important agreement. The event marked the first-ever perpetual agreement between Ducks Unlimited Canada and a provincial government. Under the agreement Ducks Unlimited and the government will combine resources to implement a long-term wetland conservation program. The program will benefit waterfowl, other wetland-dependent species and ultimately the people of Ontario.

Mr Carroll: The benefits to waterfowl and other species will become obvious over time. You also mentioned benefits ultimately to the people of the province of Ontario. Could you share with us what you envision those particular benefits to the people to be?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Most people in Ontario realize wetlands are a critical component of Ontario's natural environment and part of our ecosystem. Wetlands are rich in animal and plant life and give us clean water. This agreement spells out clear roles and responsibilities for both organizations. We'll be working as partners in such areas as wetland-related policy, management, environmental review, resource planning and countless other areas. Ducks Unlimited has a conservation army of some 30,000 people. They have helped rehabilitate more than half a million acres of wetlands.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is firmly committed to managing Ontario's natural resources effectively and sustainably. We will continue to set standards of resource management and we will be rigorous in enforcing those standards. Together, Ducks Unlimited and the Ministry of Natural Resources will enhance the good work that has already started to protect Ontario's vital surface and groundwater resources.

HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I would like you to advise us what steps were taken to have the Health Services Restructuring Commission's chief executive officer, Mark Rochon, who is a former CEO of Humber Memorial Hospital, as you're aware, at arm's length when it came to the review of the restructuring of what has now been called the Humber River hospital corporation, involving the former Northwestern General Hospital, Humber and the York-Finch site. I wonder if you could share with us what kinds of things happened to make sure there was no conflict of interest involving Mr Rochon.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The commission operates at arm's length and, as such, it has

developed its own conflict-of-interest guidelines. The member is very free to run across the street and review those guidelines, both for staff and commissioners.

Mr Kennedy: As we heard often, the main people running across the street are cabinet ministers who have untrammelled access to this commission, but I guess what we would like to hear from you is at least some awareness about how your commission operates.

I spoke to Mr Rochon and he advised me he did not see it necessary to distance himself from a decision around the site of Northwestern and Humber, even though he was the former president of the Humber hospital, even though there is a voluminous amount of material that was not submitted by the new corporation or not considered by the commission in deciding which site would close.

The Northwestern site was chosen to close, and he was involved in the decision. I wonder, Minister, if you would comment for us on the perception of conflict of interest that creates for a lot of people in the local community. Clearly you're unaware of the rules this commission governs itself by. This gentleman was directly involved in the decision. The decision was made to close another site. A lot of information was ignored. We'd like to know why this was possible in your commission.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm not going to comment on that. If the member has a problem with Mr Rochon, he should take it up again with Mr Rochon.

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Two weeks ago a group of municipalities from the districts of Cochrane and Timiskaming, all along Highway 11 from North Bay to Longlac, met to discuss the offloading of provincial roads to municipalities. The consensus was that the municipalities are getting shafted by the provincial government. The one-time grant given to municipalities simply will not cover the cost of repairs and maintenance. Some in the municipalities were even thinking about setting up tollgates to absorb the costs that you're unloading. Municipalities are left with only two options: They will be forced to raise property taxes by a large amount or they will have to let the roads deteriorate. Minister, what is your advice for these municipalities in my area?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I would just like to say that we intend to transfer only highways that no longer serve a purpose as a provincial highway, that really serve the purpose of a local road. That should be up to the municipality, to make sure it takes on the responsibility. We want to utilize the minimum dollars that we have to protect economic development in the province and to spend those dollars we have on provincial highways that truly serve that purpose.

All I can say to the honourable member is that these municipalities have been getting the funding support for so many years, but now we can no longer do that. We must retain those dollars and utilize those dollars on true provincial highways.

Mr Len Wood: Minister, your answer doesn't make any sense. In a lot of those communities Highway 11 goes right through the community and it's the only road going through it. What you are doing is dumping or downloading the costs of these highways onto the municipalities when the province should be paying them. Thousands and thousands of transports and cars are going through. The only road to go through from east to west is Highway 11. When are you going to be prepared to sit down with these municipalities and discuss the issue? They are very much concerned that they are being shafted by this provincial government, where the province should be paying the cost of this highway going through these municipalities. Will you sit down with these municipal leaders and discuss the issue very soon?

1520

Hon Mr Palladini: I have given the municipalities my time and my staff's time, certainly, and we have addressed or looked at and listened to their concerns and tried to work with them as best we could to see how they can actually get through it. I also want to say that we have transferred, or we will be transferring, \$5.4 billion from education off the residential tax, so I think these dollars are going to be utilized.

We have also transferred highways that are in good condition, and for the ones we are transferring that need the work, we're supplying monetary funds. We are working with the municipalities and I believe we're going to continue to work with them in making sure that we're going to help them get through this transition as best and as quickly as possible.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in regard to the recent appointment of the members of the transition team. What specific credentials and qualifications, sets of experience and other relevant criteria did you use in making your decision as to the people who were selected, what kind of reporting time are you expecting them to have in terms of some of the priority issues they will evidently raise with you, and how do you see them concluding in terms of a final report on some of these priority issues?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The qualifications of the transition team are impeccable. The current Metro Toronto chairman, a known Liberal, is chairing the transition team, and we have the confidence that even with that one slight flaw in his character he will do an excellent job.

Another member of the transition team is Mrs Lois Griffin from Etobicoke, who was the chair of the Toronto Transit Commission, is presently on the police services board, was the budget chief in Metro, was also a controller for the city of Etobicoke and is extremely well qualified.

Time is not going to permit me to go into the qualifications of the other five members of the team, but I can tell you that they all have excellent qualifications.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I wanted to raise a point of

privilege with respect to the evacuation route that you tabled earlier. With respect, I wanted to point out to you that when you tabled this, you referred to it as an evacuation route or an evacuation plan — I can't remember which — but you said, "Due to the very fine work of the member for Mississauga South." I think by in fact naming the member — I think she actually did have a point of privilege earlier.

But I want to address that what we were given is a floor map which shows the three exits, which of course all members are very familiar with, and it suggests on the flip side that we make ourselves familiar with this information. I do believe that falls far short of the request that was made by the member for Mississauga South, the intent of which was for a protocol with respect to emergency plans and evacuation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Beaches-Woodbine, I know exactly what was requested from the member for Mississauga South and I'll be happy to take it up. If you would like to join us at that meeting, I'd be happy to have you there as well.

The fact is, what was requested and what was supplied are slightly different. If you would like to take the time to review it, I'll be happy to show it to you and you can bring yourself abreast of this information. When that happens, if you would like to stand on a point of privilege at that time, that would be helpful as well. But I think it's important to tell you that what has been provided here has been the information that was requested, minus another point that I said I couldn't accommodate. With the greatest respect, I know what I was requested. Frankly, I didn't realize you had that information as well, but if you do, I'll be happy to review it with you at that time.

Ms Lankin: Yes, Mr Speaker, and I appreciate that and I will say very directly to you that I did not have that information. I went to speak to the member for Mississauga South because I was concerned that the way in which you presented this information did in a sense ridicule her and her request, and it is on that that I rise on a point of privilege. I do enjoy very much your sense of humour, but I think in this case there was a sense of ridicule that many of us took when we saw the information.

The Speaker: I apologize. It was certainly not a sense of ridicule. I apologize to the members for Mississauga South and Beaches-Woodbine. Again, I will be happy to provide the information to anyone who would like it. At the time I was requested to do a couple of things, this was one of them, and I'm doing my best to provide the rest of the information to the members of the House.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTIONS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I move that substitutions be made to the membership of the following standing committees:

On the standing committee on administration of justice: Mr Rollins for Mr Johnson (Brantford); Mrs Ross for Mr

Hudak; Mr Flaherty for Mr Klees; Mr Ford for Mr Leadston; Mr Boushy for Mr Parker; Mr Young for Mr Tilson; Mr Wood (London South) for Mr Doyle; on the standing committee on estimates: Mr Beaubien for Mr Barrett; Mr Grimmett for Mr Brown (Scarborough West); Mr Pettit for Mr McLean; Mr Doyle for Mr Rollins; on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Mr Young for Mr Chudleigh; Mr Arnott for Mr Hudak; Mr Barrett for Mr Ford; Mr Carr for Mr Spina; on the standing committee on general government: Mr Tilson for Mr Maves; Mr Gilchrist for Mr Flaherty; Mr Froese for Mr Hardeman; Mrs Fisher for Mrs Ross; Mr DeFaria for Mr Young; Mr Doyle for Mr Tascona; on the standing committee on government agencies: Mr Baird for Mr Fox; Mr Guzzo for Mr Leadston; Mr Stewart for Mr Doyle; Mr Tascona for Mr Newman; Mrs Elliott for Mr Wood (London South); on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Mr Tascona for Mr Arnott; Mr Fox for Mr Hastings; Mr McLean for Mr Boushy; Mr Tilson for Mr DeFaria; Mr Hardeman for Mr Grimmett; Mr Baird for Mr Stewart; on the standing committee on the Ombudsman: Mr Pettit for Mr Froese; Mr Leadston for Mr Jordan; Mr Johnson (Brantford) for Mr DeFaria; Mr Boushy for Mrs Fisher; Mr Ouellette for Mr Stewart; Mr McLean for Mr Vankoughnet; on the standing committee on public accounts: Mrs Johns for Mr Beaubien; Mr Grimmett for Mr Carr; Mr Murdoch for Mr Hastings; Mr Preston for Mr Boushy; Mr Tascona for Mrs Elliott; on the standing committee on regulations and private bills: Mr Beaubien for Mr Smith; Mr Hardeman for Mr Boushy; Mrs Johns for Mr Hastings; Mr DeFaria for Mrs Ross; Mr Shea for Mr Pettit; Mr Vankoughnet for Mr Arnott; Mr Clement for Mr Gilchrist; on the standing committee on resources development: Mr Hastings for Mrs Fisher; Mr Jordan for Mr Baird; Mr Spina for Mr Tascona; on the standing committee on social development: Mr Klees for Mrs Johns; Mr Newman for Mr Pettit; Mr Hudak for Mr Preston; Mr Parker for Mr Froese; Mr Leadston for Mr Jordan.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

It's the pleasure of the House that the motion carry.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I move that the order for the committee of the whole House on Bill 41, An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario, be discharged and the bill be withdrawn; and that the orders for resuming the adjourned debate on the motion to consider government business on the morning of Thursday, December 12, 1996, and for resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for consideration of private members' public business be omitted from the orders and notices paper.

That Mr Morin and Mr Kennedy exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business; and that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 73.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

1530

PETITIONS

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa-Est) : «Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance dans toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord le l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que la fermeture de Montfort éloigne et diminue grandement l'accessibilité à une salle d'urgences pour plus de 150 000 personnes ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital enseignant et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme complète de services en français, mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé en Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de la communauté.»

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities,

register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

This is signed by people from Georgetown and Mississauga and Brampton and Milton, all kinds of wonderful and important communities in this province.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario that the residents of the city of Barrie do not want a charity permanent casino and video lottery terminals located in the city of Barrie."

I affix my signature.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

TEACHER-LIBRARIANS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of people from various schools in the London area. The petition reads as follows:

"A school library information centre staffed by fully qualified teacher-librarians and rich in both print and electronic resources is crucial to a quality education in an era where management of information is essential to success."

These folks are petitioning the Legislature of Ontario to ensure that teacher-librarians continue to be present in the schools.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition of about 74 pages. If they average 15 signatures on them, it will be some 1,110. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine

the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I submit this on behalf of some 1,110 members of my constituency.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris has changed the designation of estate wineries in Niagara and in southwestern Ontario from agricultural land to industrial land; and

"Whereas the primary use of winery property is not industrial but farm and commercial; and

"Whereas most of the properties involved are zoned agricultural and therefore have no access to normal services provided to industrial properties; and

"Whereas the grape and wine industry produces millions of dollars in economic activity and employs thousands of people throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas this added tax burden presents undue hardships to estate wineries and may result in job losses and a halt to the development in this important sector; and

"Whereas this change may have broader implications for all value added farming in the Niagara region;

"We, the undersigned, support the wineries of Niagara region and call upon Mike Harris and the Conservative government of Ontario to show their support for farm-based wineries on agricultural lands and the economic benefit it provides all of Ontario by removing the industrial assessment factor that the Mike Harris government has now burdened this industry with and reinstate an assessment which more fairly reflects the nature of value added farming."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition from a number of people in Middlesex county and the city of London:

"Whereas Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is a threat to our education system;

"Whereas the Education Improvement Commission has far-reaching and unprecedented powers;

"Whereas outsourcing of non-instructional jobs such as school secretaries, clerical, custodians, maintenance, audiovisual/computer technicians, computer technicians, educational assistants and cleaners will result in chaos and poor service and limited savings, if any;

"We, the residents of Ontario, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to limit the powers of the Education Improvement Commission and to guarantee successor rights for non-instructional jobs.

We support our local schools and education centre staff of the Middlesex County Board of Education who are members of CUPE Locals 1753 and 1170."

I am proud to affix my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have a petition here from the greater Grand Bend area and it says:

"We, the undersigned, support the following:

"(1) That the community commonly referred to as Grand Bend which includes the area of Bosanquet north of the Greenway Road and the Pinery Provincial Park, as well as the areas of Stephen township which are adjacent to the existing village of Grand Bend, be brought together as one single community, retaining the name Grand Bend;

"(2) Where a newly amalgamated municipality is created that the unified greater Grand Bend area not be divided by municipal boundaries;

"(3) That the amalgamated municipality even include this greater Grand Bend community to provide the best economic alternatives for supply of service and utilities and fair representation for our area;

"(4) That the individual residential areas and subdivisions situated within this greater Grand Bend retain their identity and characteristics and continue to operate within their community associations."

I have over 100 residents who have signed this petition.

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship, without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of Ontario."

1540

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have yet another petition regarding health care. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I affix my signature.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's appropriate that, as the justice committee considers Bill 84 in clause-by-clause, I can bring forward this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to the professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I am proud to affix my signature.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau has engaged consultants in each of the six health planning regions of Ontario to develop regional plans for the rationalization of addiction services, the consultants in the central east region have recommended that an integrated service delivery system be established, consisting of Simcoe Outreach Services, Seven South Street and the Community Care Centre for Substance Abuse. It is further recommended that the funding for the integrated service system flow through the Royal Victoria Hospital, which would have responsibility for overall governance and management of this new system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That if an integrated service system is required for Simcoe county that it not be funded through, governed or managed by the Royal Victoria Hospital. This recommendation does not appear to meet the project objective 'to achieve cost savings.' We request that a review of the original proposals by the service providers of the county be initiated which detailed several alternative models."

I've signed my name to that.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions; the member for Port Arthur.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Madam Speaker, as you know —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Port Arthur, I missed somebody in rotation. I regret this. It should be the member for Sarnia. Maybe tomorrow.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): "Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I move government notice of motion number 17:

That the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1997, and ending October 31, 1997, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Very briefly, I'm not going to talk at any great length about this motion other than to say that I'm pleased to put forward the motion for interim supply. As most members are aware, the motion for interim supply provides the government with authority to make payments to hospitals, school boards, municipalities, suppliers, civil servants and others. These payments are currently being made under the authority of a motion of interim supply which came into effect on November 1, 1996.

The motion for interim supply is required now as the authority under the existing motion expires on April 30, 1997, and payments cannot be made after that date. Scheduled payments in early May include, among others, payments for general welfare, transfers to hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies. To ensure that the province meets its obligations in an orderly fashion, I would encourage members to be supportive in passing this motion as promptly as possible.

The process to make these payments, especially those on general welfare etc, takes anywhere between three and five days. Of course today is April 28; a three-day time period would expire on April 30. If these cheques are to go out to the people who need them the most, the sooner this motion is passed, the better. Otherwise it is conceivable that persons would receive moneys owed to them after the end of the month.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The real question is why the government always delays the placement of interim supply before this House until the last minute, meaning the end of the month. The Treasurer — he will forgive me for making this accusation; it won't be directed personally to him — will ensure that people begin to phone the opposition if this is delayed. Every government I've seen has done this, Ernie, so I'm not making the accusation to you.

What normally happens, I'm told, is that the government that brings in the motion at a very late date then arranges on the last day of the month for people to phone the opposition and say, "If only you would pass interim supply, then all the cheques can go out in the province and people who have to be paid will be paid."

Hon Mr Eves: I wanted to deal with it last Thursday.

Mr Bradley: The member did, to his credit, want to deal with this last Thursday and have it wrapped up. I certainly agree that would have been preferable. I know that was his desire. Sometimes it doesn't exactly happen, for a variety of reasons.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Why would that be?

Mr Bradley: You don't want to know the answer to why that would be right now because I don't want to start a fight in the Conservative caucus. I try to promote harmony and continuity in the Conservative caucus as much as possible. I don't want to start an argument in the middle of the Conservative caucus because we're just trying to heal the wounds that are there now, let alone start new wounds.

The best thing that can happen — this is a debate that should take two weeks, for instance, in my view, because then it would allow us to canvass all of the issues that are so important to members of this assembly, because it

really deals with the expenditures of all of the ministries of the Ontario government. Heaven knows we need to go after those expenditures to see where they've been cut too much, what effect they're having on the people of this province. The poor Minister of Environment had to head off to the United States and tell everybody he'd cut his expenditures by one third, cut his staff by one third. That's the kind of thing we have to debate in this motion. It's most unfortunate we have to do it so late in the month of April.

1550

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I too am somewhat surprised. I marvel at the lack of responsibility, speaking on behalf of the government, of the messenger, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. At the 11th hour he comes and says, "Beware that if you don't pass this supply motion in a hurry, the welfare recipients, those who have less, will not get their cheques, because it takes four or five days for finance to cut a cheque."

On the road to Damascus, indeed. There was no concern a few months back, a year and a half ago perhaps, when under regulation welfare recipients were cut by 21.6%. But suddenly the government says, "Yes, you must hurry and you must pass the bill so people can get their cheques."

I can understand why they are in a hurry to have the supply motion adopted and supported, because I'm looking at the Ontario Finances, the quarterly update, of December 31, 1996. It tells a pretty sad story. They need the money, they need it now, and they need it big time, because their expenses are at an annual rate of \$54.9 billion.

This is a government that is spending more. In spite of all their mean, deliberate, systematic cuts, they're still spending more than the year before, and substantially so, some \$600 million more. Obviously they can't manage the store. They cannot manage state expenses. Now they're in a hurry, and they're telling the Liberals and the NDP: "Please help us out of our dilemma. We have overspent by some \$600 million. We can't get the books in order."

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further comments or questions?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I wanted to speak and to compliment the Minister of Finance on this timely motion. He wanted, of course, to get it in last week and wasn't given that kind of permission from the other parties that would have accommodated the orderly type of business that this government has demonstrated. So I wanted to compliment him on bringing it forward today and making sure that the business of this government is done in a businesslike way from day to day, from week to week, from month to month and will accomplish those things.

After all, it was about two years ago that we promised the people of Ontario jobs and prosperity and a better future and some hope. We are leading towards that. I would just like to say that not only is this a timely announcement but the budget is being planned for May 6, and this will just accommodate the interim period. It's quite a straightforward, regulated way of doing business

in a businesslike manner. So I just wanted to compliment the Minister of Finance on this very, very timely motion.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the comments from the member for Perth. I used to be in business myself, and I've never seen anybody try to run a business like this. It's sort of like, "We've got to meet the payroll, what, on Wednesday?" and this is coming as a complete surprise to the government. "Oh, my gosh, we'd better go to our bankers," the public, "and get the money."

They say, "Well, we could have done this last Thursday." Any sensible businessperson, my business friends, they get their line of credit in place not two days before, not a week before, but several weeks before.

I say to my business friends out there, many of whom are very supportive, I might say, of the revolution, I know you think they can run government like a business, but I'll just tell you, we sit here and watch them giving business a bad name. Here's an example. Member for Perth, would you ever have run a business where two days before you need to meet the payroll and all the expenses, you're scrambling around trying to get approval from the bankers? As I say, the banker in this case is the public. So the minister today is saying, "Please give it to us, because the cheques are going to be bouncing so high around the province if you don't."

To my friends in the business community watching this, it must be a bit embarrassing for you. As I say, it's a bit like eating in a fine restaurant, to my business friends. You don't want to go in the kitchen and see how this stuff is being made by the government, because it's not a pretty sight, and this is an example: trying to get approval in a matter of hours for hundreds of millions of dollars. It's sort of like running to the bank and saying: "Listen, my cheques are going to bounce. Please, please, sign right away."

The gun is to our head. We'll have to sign, and we will sign. But it's sure no way to run a business, in my opinion.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Interjection: Response by the minister?

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. He's not in his seat at the moment, so we'll continue with debate. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I wonder if I might have unanimous consent from the House to share my time — I have 90 minutes, as the critic, to speak — with my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: Can you tell me which colleagues you're sharing your time with?

Mr Phillips: Mr Bradley and Ms Papatello.

The Acting Speaker: St Catharines and Windsor-Sandwich? Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that; I really do. Just to begin the debate on supply, and as we said in the exchange we had just a few moments ago, we understand the need for the government to get approval to supply, and we certainly will be cooperative in that. I might say that I hope the public understand there is a need for some debate on it. You're asking for hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money. Hardworking, taxpaying, decent people have to pay this money. I think they would expect at least some debate around the merits of it. I wanted to talk a

little bit about some of the aspects that I think the public are now aware of in terms of why the government needs this money.

The first thing I want to talk about is what we call around here the downloading, the dumping, putting provincial expenses onto the municipal property taxpayer. I think this is going to be a huge issue over the next two years. I think the government, by the way, is making a fundamental mistake.

Just so we're all aware and the public is aware, the government, quite to the surprise of virtually everyone in the province, decided they were going to dump 100% of ambulance service, 100% of the public health services and 100% of social housing. I might add that well over half of all of the housing is for senior citizens. So at a time when we all know that that population is growing, when the demands are, as we all know, going to increase, and actually increase quite significantly over the next few years, that's all being moved off the province and the responsibility moved from the broader public right onto property taxes, 100% of it.

So when the seniors in my area say, "What's going on down at Queen's Park, Gerry?" I say, "Are you aware that, while Mike Harris promised he wouldn't do this, they're dumping all of these seniors' apartments onto the property tax?" They're dumping half of long-term care, meaning the services for seniors in their homes and in nursing homes and in homes for the aged, and half of the social assistance. Remember that a large number of people who are on social assistance are children, young people, who rely on social assistance for their clothing, for their housing, for their food, for their shelter, for all of those things. Half of that is going to be dumped onto property tax. The problem with this is that some of our most sensitive services are being taken off the province and put on the property tax, and you cannot find one single study that's been done in this area that supports that.

1600

The government itself appointed what they call the Who Does What panel, handpicked by the Premier, headed up by someone called Mr David Crombie, a well-respected individual here in Ontario. They are saying: "This is wrong. We fundamentally disagree with this. It would be a huge mistake. It undoes much of the disentanglement." That's a term we use around here for trying to find a way to separate services and have municipalities handle 100% of one, the province 100% of another and the federal government 100% of another. But Crombie and that panel say this dumping is going to undo much of the good work they had planned on disentanglement — the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, the United Way.

I personally travelled around the province and talked to mayors and reeves and regional councillors. The regional councillor of Hamilton-Wentworth — a well-respected individual and, I suspect, a Conservative, although his political background is irrelevant to me, but I suspect if you were to ask him, that's what he'd be — says the Mike Harris plan is fundamentally flawed. You cannot find, as I say, one study, one group, I don't think

you can find a mayor, a reeve or a councillor who thinks this idea makes sense. It's a mistake. It's as clear as that.

I think I know how the government got into it. They said they were going to take education off residential property taxes. They announced that without looking at what the implications are. So now what you've got going on out there around the province is AMO, which is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a well-respected body that represents the municipalities, desperately trying to get the government out of its own mess. They are having closed-door negotiations.

By the way, I think it's a mistake. I think it's wrong that something as fundamental as long-term care, seniors' housing, assistance for young people, for children is being negotiated behind closed doors. As a matter of fact, I asked the Minister of Finance a question last Thursday on this and he said, "We really can't talk about it because there are sensitive negotiations going on." I don't think that's right. I really don't think it's right that behind closed doors we're kind of bargaining seniors' futures against roads, sewers and construction projects. I don't think that's the way we should be setting public policy. This thing should be out in the open and we should be saying: "How do we want this province to be run? Do we want our seniors relying on having to go down to city hall in tough times to try and persuade a council that they should perhaps take property taxes up when demand" — believe me, this will really be a problem when we're into a recession.

There will be one. Who knows when? Two, three, four five, I don't know when, but there's no economist, no one out there who would say there won't be a recession in the future. When that happens we have, without question, put at risk our seniors and our children, our most vulnerable, because you can imagine, Madam Chair — you actually were a city of Toronto councillor — the debate that will take place when a recession hits and the councillors are trying to keep property taxes down so people won't lose their homes but the seniors are there saying, "We have an increased demand on our services and we need more help."

The reason I'm stressing this is that right now, as we speak, this seems to be heading down a road, and it is a mistake. As I say, you only have to listen to every municipal government, listen to the chambers of commerce and the boards of trade around the province, listen to the United Way around the province, listen to all our councillors.

I would hope the government would rethink this. We're in opposition and we're always accused, "You're always just complaining and you don't offer any solutions." In the Liberal caucus, as soon as this was announced, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked that we go around the province and talk with municipalities and groups that are affected by it. We did that. We went to 11 communities. I'll forget some, but we were in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sarnia, London, Windsor, Hamilton, Ottawa, Kingston — as I say, I'm sure I'm forgetting one — Toronto, and without exception we were told by literally every person who came before us, "We think this is a mistake."

What should be done about it? That's what people want to know. What should we now do about it? What we feel is quite clearly that the government should stop the process of downloading. I know how tough it is for a government because you've essentially got to say, "Maybe the consequences of this weren't as clearly understood when we made the decision." That's the first thing. The government has to acknowledge and say, "Listen, we're prepared to rethink this." The government has to look at the alternatives, and I might say that the Who Does What panel, your own panel, handpicked by Premier Harris, has some recommendations that I think offer the potential for solutions. They should look carefully at that.

Further, what has to happen is that the government provide publicly the data and the impact. We in our caucus have been saying for at least weeks now, "Listen, let's have the information, let's have the data from the government on the implications of these changes."

Finally, the government has to slow down on this thing. Unfortunately the budget comes out a week tomorrow, and it's pretty clear to us that the government seemed to be heading down a trail of not being prepared to change their minds on this.

That's the first thing I wanted to talk about, the downloading, the dumping, the fundamental mistake the government is making. I am amazed that members of the back bench in the Conservative caucus have sat still for it this long. I can assure you that once this finally hits and the municipalities see what you have dumped onto them and the responsibility, and the seniors see what you have done, you have got a significant political problem.

The second thing I want to talk a little bit about is the impact of the financial plan on jobs. The problem with the employment situation is that we get into a debate about numbers. I will say, "We've got a significant job problem," and the government will say, "No, no, we don't; we're solving the problem." The only way I can see to deal with it is just simply to let the facts speak for themselves. Here is the document dated April 14, from the government of Ontario, Ministry of Finance, Mr Eves's own document.

You'll recall that during the last campaign the government said in its Common Sense Revolution, this document here — the document was absolutely crystal clear — on the first page, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years." It was categorical. It wasn't even, "We hope it will," or "We think it could lead to," or "If we do these things, it's possible." It was clear, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years."

If you take that literally, Mike Harris has now been in office 21 months — time is rolling along very quickly — and we should have seen, after 21 months, 254,000 jobs created. So we should have seen, as I say, towards that goal of 725,000, 254,000 jobs. We've actually seen 107,000 jobs created, so first the Harris plan is way behind the promise. I go back to saying that's Mr Eves's own document, and anybody is welcome to look at it, labour force and employment statistics for Ontario: 107,000 jobs created since they came into office and they promised 254,000.

1610

The reason I raise this is that I think one of the key tests of this government will be how well it did versus its target of 725,000 jobs. Of particular concern to me, frankly, is that in the last seven months Ontario has actually lost 11,000 jobs while the rest of Canada has gained 88,000 jobs. The reason I raise that is the government has been saying: "Listen, we're in great economic times. Things are booming. We should be seeing jobs created like you've never seen before." But what's happening? Why is it that we've lost 11,000 jobs in the last seven months? I'll acknowledge, by the way, that March was not a bad month.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): How many jobs, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: Well, we now have 11,000 fewer jobs in Ontario than we did in August 1996 and the rest of Canada has 88,000 more jobs. Even with a reasonable March, we still have 11,000 fewer jobs now than we had in August.

Mr Bradley: Eleven thousand fewer.

Mr Phillips: Eleven thousand fewer, as my colleague says.

Mr Wettlaufer: How many jobs in March, Gerry? You don't want to say it.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, the member for Kitchener.

Mr Phillips: The thing that really concerns me is the youth unemployment. Again from the government's own numbers, when you move into the Ontario young workers, tragically — you can't see this at home — for January to March, the first quarter of 1997, it was 31,000 fewer jobs. The youth unemployment rate is now 18.5%; for the same time a year ago it was 16.2%.

The reason I raise all of this is that the government, each time we raise it, says: "We're just fine. Things are just fine on the job front. You in opposition are fearmongering." That's a favourite expression whenever we say anything that is the truth but may upset people: "You're fearmongering. Don't tell people what's happening out there. You're fearmongering." But the government's own numbers speak for themselves.

We have been for almost a year now imploring the government to take this seriously. But no: "Everything's going to be fine. Don't worry about jobs. We're on a roll and the problem will go away."

I will predict two things. One is that the economy is rolling along not badly right now. We actually had quite a disappointing 1996, by all accounts. Most people thought the economy in Ontario would grow around 3% in 1996; it grew less than 2%. But that means that 1997, off a smaller base, should do quite well; we should see real growth in excess of 3%. The problem with that is that even with real growth of 3%, the government says when you've got real growth of 3% jobs grow at 2%; if jobs grow at 2%, that's about 110,000 jobs a year, way short of the 145,000 jobs.

So my second concern is on the employment front. Until the government acknowledges that this is a serious problem, we've said: "Here's what you do. At least acknowledge that it continues to be a substantial problem. Make it a high priority in the province of Ontario." I will

almost guarantee that within a year Mike Harris will call his jobs conference. He'll finally take our advice on this. It'll be pretty glitzy. They'll probably have a nice blue backdrop. It'll look like the Conservative logo behind him there. He'll be sitting with quite a smile on his face. It'll be Jobs Growth Ontario or something catchy like that. But we'll be happy that at least, finally, he's taken some steps.

I will say that the private sector has lots of creative ideas. They're out there. Actually, an old classmate of mine, a senior person at a bank, retired and has headed up, as a volunteer, something called Careers First. It's a program designed to get young people internship programs. It's all, by the way, I might add, funded by the private sector. It uses the Internet. It's a creative idea. That's but one idea of many that are out there. But we're not going to take advantage of them as long as we say there's no problem.

I wanted to raise that during the supply debate because — I'll make this prediction, by the way. Add up the number of times the government says "jobs" in its budget next week. I will be amazed if they don't say "jobs" at least 100 times, because that's the way to make people think you're actually doing something about it: Use the word a lot. Count them up. I'll bet at least 100 "jobs" mentioned. The problem is, we're only using rhetoric, and no real commitment.

I wanted to talk a little about a couple of issues of particular concern to me, and by the way, I don't mean that other members of the Legislature do not have the same concerns. I am concerned about the government taking its eye off race relations. I know the Ministry of Education has cut out a group that was responsible for helping to coordinate race relations in the schools province-wide, and I believe the Ministry of Citizenship has eliminated the race relations directorate.

I have a personal concern — and I don't mean to say I'm the only one in the Legislature; I realize lots of us do — that if we do not put the priority on this area and find ways in which we take advantage of learning from each other in this area and put some resources behind it — frankly, this does not happen just by accident — we are really sowing the seeds of problems, particularly when we see the unemployment rate among young people, reported here at 19%, but it's really around 30%.

I will say also that my old school, the University of Western Ontario, just announced proudly that tuition fees for the MBA program have gone now to \$18,000 a year. I think I've got that number right. Actually, it came from a public relations release by Mr Snobelen, the Minister of Education, proudly patting the university on the back.

Mr Bradley: For the rich.

Mr Phillips: That's right. If we want to create an environment where a lot of our young people simply to not see themselves in the future of Ontario, you can start to see where we're sowing those seeds.

The presidents of the universities came before the finance and economic affairs committee, as many people will remember, and they were advocating deregulating of tuition fees: sort of let the marketplace handle itself. I can guarantee it will. I can guarantee that the fees for those faculties where people think they can get a job will

skyrocket. We'll have many young people who say: "I just don't see myself ever being able to do that because I don't see myself being able to borrow that much money. My family can't get that far into debt."

I use these small but important examples: The elimination in the education ministry of the race relations group. I coach hockey too, by the way. I coach hockey with a police officer who is probably — I hope he doesn't mind me saying this — Canada's expert on youth gangs. He's an intelligence officer with the Metro Toronto Police Force. There's no question that there are organized gangs out there. As I say, if we take the resources away from trying to manage our race relations activity, that's a very foolish way to try to save money. If you want to look at where you invest money, it's in those programs, among others, that promote a harmonious society. I wanted specifically to mention that one, to hope that in the budget coming up there's some sober second thought put on that, because we truly are providing ourselves with, as they say, a recipe for a problem in the future.

1620

I want to talk about a fourth area as well and that is the property tax bill which is coming up. This Thursday we will have what we call around here clause-by-clause. It will be the final piece of the property tax bill and then essentially it's gone. Our concern on the bill is this: Everybody in the province says there is a need for property tax reform. Sold. We agree. By the way, a lot of people say, "I really applaud the government for its courage," and as my colleague here said — was it the First Brigade?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr Phillips: They had courage as well, but none of them survived.

I will just say that on the property tax bill the government has done little, if any, planning on the impact of the bill.

Mr Bradley: Wineries are worried.

Mr Phillips: Wineries are worried? Well, my colleague Mr Pouliot and myself were intrigued during the hearings, because when seniors and seniors' groups came in and said, "We're very worried about the future because if this means property taxes are going to go up dramatically, how are we going to survive?" Mr Ford had a good suggestion, which was: "Well, you can take a reverse mortgage out on your house. You can handle it that way." Sure enough — this really surprised me — it was only a matter of one or two days later that in the newspaper on this property tax bill: "Concerned Seniors Pay Property Tax the Easy Way."

"With the threat of megacity comes the possibility of increased property taxes. This will affect everyone, but hardest hit will be seniors, who already rely on monthly pensions and retirement savings to keep taxes up to date."

Then it goes on here to say — it's a reverse mortgage. It is a plan where if you're a senior, you simply pay your taxes by putting a reverse mortgage on your property and then, as they say here, "This leaves the homeowner to enjoy the full benefits during their lifetime, knowing that it does not require repayment until they die."

The reason I raise this is not that we don't need property tax reform, but that like so many other things the government's doing — including, by the way, today we're debating supply a matter of hours before the cheques have to go out. For the public who aren't aware of what we're doing here, essentially the government has come to the Legislature today, only a matter of about 35 minutes ago, to say, "Please give us approval to spend money," because the cheques have to go out, I gather tomorrow. As I say to my business friends, "If you were ever running a business this way and you suddenly went to the bank and said, 'We need more money because we've got to send the cheques out tomorrow,' the bank would simply laugh at you and say, 'That's no way to run a shop.'"

Similarly, on the property tax bill I will just say to people that the government has not thought through the implications of this. For the business community, by the way, I would say this: Something called the business occupancy tax is coming off property tax. Everybody applauds that. That is a huge amount of money. Some \$1.6 billion, 11% of all tax revenue that comes into the municipalities, is business occupancy tax. Mike Harris proudly announced that's gone and he got high fives all around the Albany Club because that was seen as a good thing.

The problem is that the municipalities — it wasn't his money. He gave away somebody else's money, namely, the municipalities' money, and now they've got to recoup that. Business occupancy tax comes off, and I don't mean to offend the banks at all, but the big bank towers in Metropolitan Toronto are going to see their taxes drop, each tower, by \$3 million to \$5 million.

Mr Bradley: They'll be happy.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says they'll be happy. Believe me, I appreciate the role of the banks. We've got world-class banking institutions here. We need a strong financial sector, all of those things, but that \$3 million to \$5 million per tower has to be made up, and it's going to be made up by small business. There's no question about it. As a matter of fact, an organization called the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, a well-respected, well-regarded voice of business, has expressed their concerns.

This property tax bill, first, shifts taxes dramatically from one business to another, and generally speaking, big business will pay less, small business will pay more. By the way, the government will not issue any public analysis on it. I gather they won't even tell the back bench the impact of this. But I'll just alert the public that almost exactly a year from now, end of April, early May, the tax bills will start to go out and you'll begin to see the impact of them.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt was saying how profligate the government was for not bringing forward this motion for interim supply earlier. They don't even have a quorum to discuss it.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate how urgent this matter is for the government to get its money in; it's difficult to keep the quorum.

I just wanted to review the property tax bill, because it is coming and the implications are clear: first, a shift from large business to small business, and for some quite dramatic. The government hasn't thought that through.

Second, the rural municipalities are particularly worried about this. They came before our committee — actually, AMO came and said, "The bill has to be changed," because they are extremely worried about the amount of revenue they're going to lose.

I wanted to bring this point up as well: On the property tax bill that will be law a year from now, I just don't want anybody to say, "Well, nobody told us." If you're a small business person out there, you should be phoning your local chamber and saying, "What is going to happen to my property taxes with this bill when they shift taxes on the business occupancy?"

If you're a rural municipality, I think they've already raised their concerns. I hope the government listened carefully during the proceedings and is proposing some amendments to deal with those concerns.

Finally, I thought I'd spend just a minute on another part of the budget coming up, the revenue source, and then I'll have my colleague speak.

All the people in my community understand the need to get our fiscal house in order and they're prepared to do their bit, but I'll tell you where they come apart from the government. I say to people, "The reason the government tells us we have to put a user fee on drugs" — my mother-in-law paid a fee last July. She thought it was for a full year, and then on April 1 she had to pay the fee again. She thought she was paying for a full year. I say, "Well, the government is saying they've got to get their fiscal house in order," and people understand that, but here's where the problem is: If our fiscal problems are so great that we've all got to sacrifice, people on social assistance — if you've never tried to live on that amount of money, then I don't think you have any appreciation of how difficult life is when you cut somebody on social assistance by 20%. But the government says, "We've got to do that to get our fiscal house in order."

1630

Probably a third of the hospitals in this province are going to be closed to get our fiscal house in order. The government has cut at least \$600 million out of education to get our fiscal house in order. Students now are paying I think \$18,000 in tuition fees for MBAs to get our fiscal house in order. "If that's the case," people say to me, "tell me again, how can we afford a \$5.5-billion tax cut?"

I will say once again that people in this province who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, \$250,000 a year, are going to get a \$500-million tax break. The tax break for them will be \$500 million. There's no doubt the government will bring in the rest of its tax cut. This is why many of the government members ran. This is the Holy Grail. They believe government is

a beast and the beast has got to be starved, and the way you starve it is that you cut off its revenue. I understand that.

I remember very well that the day the Common Sense Revolution came out was about six weeks before Reform was having its meeting to decide whether or not to come into Ontario. I remember that very well. There was a big debate. Do you remember that? Reform was going to run candidates provincially. The way to head them off was to bring out the Reform agenda: the Common Sense Revolution. It came out in May, their convention was in June or early July, and sure enough, Preston Manning said, "We're not going to run candidates provincially." Whoever negotiated with him must have been terrific. I don't know whether it was Mike himself or whom they sent, but the Common Sense Revolution kept Reform out of Ontario, because Reform said: "Boy, that's our agenda. There it is." That little document there won the election; no doubt about it. Reform did not come into Ontario. It was a coup for the government. Preston Manning said, "No, no, we'll support you provincially." I don't know what the quid pro quo was, but he seems a little angry about it now. The document satisfied the Reform Party. There was no need to come into Ontario because they already had the Reform agenda.

The reason I raise all of this is that I don't have any doubt that the budget next week, a week tomorrow, will have the rest of the tax cut. I don't doubt that a bit. Remember this: The government says it will not balance its books until March 31, 2001. Again I say to my business friends, if we're going to have to borrow all this money to pay for the tax cut, if we're not going to balance our books until March 31, 2001, if this year we've got to go out and borrow billions of dollars to pay for the tax cut, is that really a smart thing? The analogy for me is that if the company is bankrupt — I'll use the business analogy because that's the only language of Mike Harris — how can we afford the dividend? It's \$5 billion, and by the way, every penny of it is borrowed until we balance the books.

Just on supply, we used to begin the debate on it and say that obviously we'll make certain the government gets the money to pay its bills. We would have preferred that they do it on a more orderly basis, but I wanted to raise several issues that we think are important in the debate around supply.

Mr Bradley: The members of the government wanted me to wear my jacket before I speak today and I will do so.

I want to start off where the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has ably dealt with the government in so many areas, left off, and that was the tax cut. I think the tax cut is fundamental to everything this government is doing and it is causing the government no end of grief in many areas.

I was at a gathering of people involved with education the other day and more than one person there was admitting to having voted for the Conservative Party and the Common Sense Revolution. A couple of them were people who said, "We thought the deficit had to be addressed, so we thought Mike Harris was going to be interested in addressing the deficit." I had to explain to

them, impartially as always, that the government was going to borrow money to give a tax cut. In other words, when the Conservatives left office, they would be actually adding unnecessarily to the debt load and the debt total of Ontario. These people were astounded because they thought the Conservative Party was all about cutting the deficit and they thought that was a good idea.

There is a fair consensus out there, I would say, that people want to see some kind of restraint on the growth of government expenditures, but they were shocked to hear that when the tax cut is fully implemented, as the Dominion Bond Rating Service said, it would cost the government coffers close to \$5 billion per year and that that money would have to be borrowed and interest paid on that money, so the wealthiest people in our society would benefit the most by the tax cut.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): You bring out the same old stick all the time.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Humber is angry as I mention this. When I attack the rich, he becomes angry. When I attack the privileged, he becomes angry. I fully understand that. But I say to him that what happens, Mr Speaker, as you would understand, is that the more money a person is making, the larger the sum of money that is going to be returned to that person in a tax cut. So the wealthiest people in our society will benefit the most. If that's what the member for Etobicoke-Humber wants, then that's what he's going to get. He can be pleased with that, but I'm going to tell you there are a lot of people in this province who are not.

Mr Ford: We're trying to improve the economy. You wouldn't understand.

Mr Bradley: The member says in a condescending fashion that I wouldn't understand. Let me tell the member that I have discussed this matter with small-c conservative economists, impartial people, and I've said: "Tell me impartially. You're conservative, I would say. You're a person who thinks conservatively on everything, particularly economic matters. What is the effect of cutting taxes and deeply cutting government expenditures at the same time?" Invariably they said it has a contractionary effect on the economy; not an expansionary but a contractionary effect. We're not talking about socialists, we're talking about conservative economists, people who all their lives have espoused if not Conservative dogma, certainly Conservative principles, who have told me that is the case.

I invite you to phone Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, who has fashioned himself on municipal council as a paragon of fiscal restraint. He has been accused, he has been called Professor Negative and Dr No, because on many occasions he has not supported, let's say, some popular expenditures. I asked Dr Kushner about this. I said: "You're a small-c conservative. What will the effect be?" This is what he told me the effect would be. He even introduced a motion at St Catharines city council calling upon the government not to proceed with the income tax cut for that reason. He also saw the consequences. He knew that down the line his municipal council would have to pick up the tab; as the province got the credit for cutting income tax, municipal councilors would have the unenviable choice of either cutting

services even more — and their services had already been cut considerably — or imposing user fees, which do not take into account a person's ability to pay, or imposing municipal tax increases, which are regressive, because again they don't take into account an individual's or a family's ability to pay. He questioned this policy. There's a Conservative questioning Conservative policy.

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What we're seeing is that the government not only has to borrow the money, but it has to make cuts far beyond what most people in the Conservative caucus ever contemplated. That would tell me why several members of the Conservative caucus were openly grumbling several months ago about the advisability of this tax cut. I see in the House today some of my colleagues in the Conservative caucus who have spoken out on this, who have had the intestinal fortitude and concern to speak out. They now don't have their jobs as parliamentary assistants —

Mr Pouliot: And \$11,000.

Mr Bradley: — and \$11,000 that goes with that job, but at least they were prepared to speak out on these matters. I want to commend them.

I said earlier today I wasn't here to sow the seeds of discontent in the Progressive Conservative caucus, because that's not my goal. I'm simply trying to encourage others to follow the example of those members who have had the intestinal fortitude to speak out. They lose \$11,000, and some of the people who have adhered to the Mike Harris policy very openly and enthusiastically have found themselves thrust into the position of parliamentary assistant. That is something rather interesting to note.

My friend the agriculture minister is here today. He and I agree on some things and disagree on other things. I will come later on, I want to tell him, to the issue of the new assessment for estate wineries, because I think he can be of help to those of us in the Niagara and south-western Ontario areas because of the rejigging. It's not his ministry, but he as agriculture minister can help us out. I'll ask him about that a little later on.

What we're seeing as well is that unfortunately, as a condition of the tacit support of the Conservative Party, Jean Charest, who wanted to go in a different direction, was forced to accept the dogma of the tax cut at the Winnipeg meeting. I've talked to many Conservatives who aren't right-wing, admittedly, they're middle-of-the-road Conservatives, who said: "You know, we were hoping for something different. We were hoping for a return to the Conservative Party that we knew best. We had hoped that Jean Charest would adopt policies more moderate to the Conservative government." But the price of the tacit support of the Conservative government has been adopting the Reform Party policy of the provincial government of Ontario.

What is more ominous — and I'm sure many in the Conservative caucus agree with me; some who are no longer parliamentary assistants have expressed this — is the increasing dependence of the Ontario government, and frankly a lot of other governments, on gambling revenues. I see this as insidious. I see this as extremely detrimental to our society. I recognize there are people in all parties who disagree with me and what I'm saying, but I think governments all over are moving far too

quickly into the area of gambling and they're causing untold, and some told, problems for our society.

Of course — may I relate this, if I can, to the tax cut — if you're losing revenue on the other side from the income tax, which takes into account a person's ability to pay, obviously you're going to have to get the money somewhere else. That's made the government more vulnerable to the argument that it must continue to expand gambling activities, the ultimate being, of course, video lottery terminals, as I have mentioned, in all the bars and restaurants in Ontario. That is the ultimate choice to be made. Unfortunately, that will be the ultimate in terms of causing social problems.

Another area I'd like to touch on, because it's important to all of us, is the area of closing hospitals. The government has engaged in what I call crackpot realism. That is, it has convinced people that they must stab themselves in the heart because somehow we are all guilty of wanting a good health care system. The government has convinced a certain segment of the population, particularly I would call it the chattering classes and some others, that somehow we must punish ourselves in the field of health care to help meet the fiscal requirements of this government, particularly to meet the tax cut this government is giving out.

Early on what happened was they intimidated health councils and they intimidated individual hospitals into virtual silence while various restructuring committees went around the province determining which hospitals must close. If you're wondering why local restructuring committees would recommend the closing of hospitals, they were told, as in the case of Niagara, that Niagara hospitals were going to be cut in their operating budgets by a further \$44 million on top of the onerous cuts that had already been imposed. You can imagine, then, and it wouldn't surprise you that local restructuring commissions would then be recommending the closing of hospitals, much to the chagrin of those who know that we will need those hospitals in the years to come.

Then what happens is the report comes out. Initially, the winners — that is, those who are either getting more out of this or are not adversely impacted — quietly support or moderately support the recommendations, whereas the losers, those who are going to be closed, begin a campaign against that edict that they shall be closed.

The most difficult part, and the one which brings great anger to me, is the divide-and-conquer stage. We will reach that in St Catharines now. The crackpot realism will set in to the hospitals affected. So where before they would say, "We would like to keep our services going. We would like to keep our hospital," the fingers will now point at the other hospital. In my community of St Catharines, the various hospitals will say, "I guess if you're going to close hospitals, you should close the other hospital." So we have a bitter dispute that develops in the community.

My contention is that in St Catharines and the Niagara region we shouldn't be closing any hospitals. It is a contention borne out by Dr David Foot, one of the authors of the best-selling book *Boom, Bust and Echo*. When asked at Brock University during a public forum, "Dr Foot, what advice would you give to the Harris

administration, the government of Ontario at present, for the Niagara region, taking into consideration the demographics of the Niagara region?" which is a boom, bust, bust — in other words, a boom in population and no increase in population after that in terms of young people — he gave a one-sentence answer. He said, "Don't close hospitals."

I think he was echoing what Premier Harris said during the election campaign in 1995. In May 1995, he was asked by Robert Fisher of Global Television during the leaders' debate the following question: "Do you think you will be closing hospitals as part of your program?" or words to that effect. Premier Mike Harris, then leader of the Conservative Party, said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." No doubt Dr Foot, author of Boom, Bust and Echo, must have been encouraged by the comment of the Premier. Of course, the spin doctors of this government, the publicists of this government, like to contend, "If you agree with them or not, at least they're doing what they said they were going to do."

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They said that they were not going to close hospitals, that it was not in their plan to close hospitals, and yet right across this province we are ridiculously closing hospitals. We are shrinking the resources to existing hospitals to the extent that people will say, "I guess our only option is that we've got to consolidate," when in fact we should be providing good hospital care in a multiplicity of buildings.

My contention is that you will get an argument among people on government expenditures in a lot of areas. Some will say you should, some will say you shouldn't, and that's a fair debate. If you look at such things as public transportation, for instance, there are those, such as myself, who believe that's a good investment, but there are others who will contend it isn't a good investment and I think you would have a good debate take place.

When it comes to health care, however, my suggestion would be that the overwhelming number of people would agree that an investment in health care is a good investment. I know we can argue about how much and on what, but I'm telling you this government is moving in exactly the wrong direction by closing hospitals. The government should be doing what Mike Harris said during the election campaign: not closing hospitals.

I can tell you I stand up for all the hospitals in the Niagara region, the Hotel Dieu, the General and the Shaver in St Catharines, Niagara Falls hospital, Welland hospital and the ones they're going to close, West Lincoln in Grimsby, Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, the Port Colborne hospital, the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital. You have to understand that the Niagara region has, in Canada, the highest portion of people per capita over the age of 55. We can't be closing hospitals in the Niagara region.

Anybody who has been in the hospital — I've talked to people who themselves have been in the hospital, or had friends or relatives — will tell you it's a far different experience in 1997, say, than seven years ago, even five years ago. It's not the fault of the employees of the

hospital. They are literally run ragged, run off their feet, trying to meet the needs of their patients. Their heart is still in it, their mind is still on the job, but there are so few of them to do the job that care is deteriorating.

When I hear people say, administrators too, "We're going to cut by 200 or 300 people" the number of people working in a hospital and then say they're going to do as good a job, they're simply not going to do it, and I think people would agree with that.

Health expenditures, then, are going to be important ones to watch. I hope members of the government caucus, behind closed doors — I know not many of them want to speak out now because I know when they speak out they lose \$11,000; they lose their opportunity to be a parliamentary assistant, so I understand it. But I just ask that behind closed doors in the government caucus you make sure you tell the Premier that you want him to keep his promise not to close hospitals and that you want to see them adequately funded. If you do that, you'll be doing your job.

Let me touch on a couple of other areas. I don't have as much time as I would like to be able to do so, but I'm looking at your attack on education at this time, another whipping person, I guess you have to say, in this case, that you have. I have told this story before, but there may be members who have not heard it yet.

Mr Ford: I want you to.

Mr Bradley: The member for Humber wants me to, he says. I well remember when Dianne Cunningham came to St Catharines. Remember that one? She spoke to the teachers' federation, gave a moderate, reasonable, responsible speech to them. While they might not have agreed with everything she said, they thought, "Here's a person who is dedicated to education."

On the same day the Premier of this province, then-leader of the Conservative Party, was speaking to the Rotary Club in St Catharines, and he had an entirely different message. He must have thought he had a different audience. It shows how out of date the Premier is, because as one of my friends from the Rotary Club noted to me on the weekend, not everybody in the Rotary Club by any means would be agreeing with everything the Premier would have to say about education. But it was an audience he used to attack education and the people in it, dedicated people who have given service over the years.

He decided to attack it and there was the problem: Dianne Cunningham, moderate, middle of the road, reasonable, responsible; and the leader of the Reform-Conservative party, Mike Harris, out there attacking. It's effective. I want to say to you that it's effective, because there are people who have a certain resentment about education and people in it. They'll say, "One thing I'll say about that Harris, I don't like the guy, but he's putting those teachers in their place." All you have to do is replace the word "teachers" with somebody else, and that's exactly what they're saying. That's why it's successful. I ask the member for Lake Nipigon if he believes that.

Mr Pouliot: I believe you, sir.

Mr Bradley: The member for Lake Nipigon agrees with me in that regard.

So we're back to the intimidation factor. We're back to creating a crisis. You will well remember the first thing the Minister of Education said, caught on the tape behind closed doors saying it: "We have to create a crisis, create a chaotic situation, so that the people will then accept our answers to those questions."

He has divided and conquered. He's got people in education now pointing fingers at one another, "Close that school, not this school; cut their expenditures, not our expenditures; it's the trustees' fault; it's the other board's fault; it's the people who want adult education; it's the people who want junior kindergarten," when they should be pointing to Toronto because that's where the problem is originating, that is where the problem is being caused.

This divide and conquer will not continue to work. I know, for instance, very vulnerable people, the custodial staff, secretarial staff, clerical staff, many people who are non-instructional people in education, have had their positions downgraded and denigrated by the Conservative government of Ontario. They are concerned that there is this attack. They're saying, "Look, keep the tax cut that Mike Harris is giving to the rich, keep the tax cut that the people in the Albany Club think is reasonable, and please invest it in health care and education."

Mr Ford: You didn't talk about the federals cutting \$2 million in health care.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Bradley: The barracking from the right wing of the Conservative Party is a clear indication they don't agree with that. So we see an attack on education, we see attack on other areas.

I've talked to some municipal councillors. They're eager. They're rubbing their hands getting ready, rolling up their sleeves, saying: "Let's get on with the infrastructure program. But you know what we want to do? We want to be the ones to determine what the projects shall be." They're the local level of government. They're closest to the people. They know best the needs. But our friends in the provincial government are saying, "Oh, no, we're not going to agree to any infrastructure program unless we dictate what those projects shall be."

I believe it should be the municipalities that should be pointing out those priorities and moving forward. I hope we can resolve this matter. I really hope we can resolve it because we need that infrastructure renewal. Even though there were election ads last campaign where they made fun of infrastructure renewal, I think a lot of people saw how important it was. One of the things we could say in Ontario over the years, no matter what the government, was that we had a good infrastructure in place, that we kept it up to date, and that's what attracted a lot of people to our province. I hope that can be solved.

The municipal downloading: Even my Conservative friends on local councils are beside themselves over the dumping of all kinds of responsibilities back on municipalities and the financial implications for those. When some of them objected, the Premier said they were whiners. They were insulted by this, just as trustees on the boards of education, who were made fun of by the Minister of Education, many of them long-time Conserva-

tives and really dedicated to education, are insulted by the fact that the Minister of Education and the Premier have downplayed their significance and have stepped on them, and that the government is now downloading on municipalities.

1700

Even the well-known apologists at the municipal level for the Common Sense Revolution have pulled their punches lately because they have no arguments. All they do is get the talking points that you people get. I know that all the governments put out talking points, and you can see what the message is. "Oh, you're scaremongering," they'll say. You get the municipal administrators and finance people, and what do they say? "It's going to be a real problem. It's a genuine problem, and it's going to cost us millions upon millions of dollars." They've been a little bit silent now except the people who are looking for an appointment or something. They're not silent, but others are silent on that.

I want to quickly go through a couple of other points. The member for Windsor-Sandwich is eagerly wanting to get on today. Even though she informed me that she would be able to deal with her matters in an expeditious manner, I know that she still needs some considerable time to deal with all of her matters.

My friend the member for Wellington is here, a moderate Conservative. I don't know how he survived and got the 11 Gs, and he's a parliamentary assistant. There's one case where it's merit. I'll give him credit. But he would know that a lot of the information, a lot of the policies, come from the Fraser forum. This is the most ridiculous statement I've seen, but it shows what the Fraser forum is all about. The headline says, "Are We Threatening the Environment by Overprotecting It?" I was stunned when I read that. Here they are saying that you're going to hurt the environment by overprotecting it. That doesn't make any sense.

We had our environment minister on a trip to the United States. The last person who was in the United States with nothing to sell on environmental issues was Mulroney, and we've got another government in here, just like Brian Mulroney, going to the United States. My good friend Mr Sterling went to 11 states or something. What on earth would he tell them?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Did he take his clubs?

Mr Bradley: I hope he took his golf clubs, because he wouldn't be able to tell them anything. What he would have to tell them, the Attorney General would know, is — the Attorney General hides behind the newspaper. He's absorbed in it.

But what he would have to tell them — my friend the member for Windsor-Sandwich would know; she's from the Windsor area — is that we've cut one third of the budget and one third of the resources and one third of the staff of the Ministry of Environment. I guess he's going to tell them that's how you solve the problems, "Cut all your staff, cut all your resources, deregulate everything and the air, poof, will be much cleaner." That simply can't happen, and those such as the member for Humber who want to live back in the 1940s will find out that it simply will not improve the environment.

Blood products: I wanted to mention briefly blood products, because there are people who are affected —

Mr Ford: Scandalous.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Humber makes fun of this. The people who are affected by this don't think it's funny at all. There are some who are seriously hurt by this, people who have contracted various diseases, AIDS, hepatitis and other diseases, as a result of getting faulty blood products. What I think has to be done is full consideration has to be given to the appropriate compensation of those individuals and the development of —

Mr Ford: Should be run properly.

Mr Bradley: Again I'm shocked that the member for Etobicoke-Humber, in the middle of something serious such as this, would simply be barracking in a silly fashion from the other side, like the day he was making fun of people in the gallery, saying they mustn't have a job if they were in the gallery. I think that's an embarrassment to your fellow Conservative friends here, very, very problematic for them.

The last thing I want to touch on, though I have many others, is the issue of new books in Ontario. What new book is out? There's one called *Open for Business, Closed to People: Mike Harris' Ontario*, by Diana Ralph, Andre Regimbald and Neree St Amand. I recommend this book to people in this province. You may disagree with part of it, I may disagree with part of it, but I'm going to tell you this book has many revelations about the Harris agenda, almost as many as *Shredding the Public Interest*, which was written by Kevin Taft, a former employee of the government of Alberta — two good reads to go along with the *Common Sense Revolution*. They may reveal an awful lot about the reasons this government is moving in the direction it is.

The last thing I want to mention is privatization. The privatization of the LCBO would be a major mistake. The privatization of the Niagara Parks Commission would be a major mistake, because I have this vision that you people want to see Disneyland North there. That's a wonderful example. A Conservative administration set up the Niagara Parks Commission. It has never had a cent of government money. It has always been a profit maker. It's good for the people. It has done an outstanding job. What do I see? I see it on the list of potential privatization projects and I am appalled to see that happen.

I'm going to share with my colleague the member for Windsor-Sandwich an opportunity to talk about these matters and to carry on another day with other matters of importance.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): It's always my pleasure to give up part of my time to our House leader — thankful that he is the House leader and can take some of my time.

I think it's interesting for the people at home to understand that every now and then the government does come forward with an interim supply bill, looking for some money to continue the business of government. It also gives us some pause to have a look at exactly what the government is spending their money on, or in what cases in Essex county, what they are not spending their money on. Naturally, the first thing that comes to mind

is health care. Some of the other significant issues that affect not just Windsor and Essex county but are certainly right across Ontario are the areas of youth, jobs, children's services, the environmental commission, environmental issues in general, education is a huge issue, and I would like to mention briefly as well the firefighters bill and the move to privatize firefighting. If this Conservative government can, they will.

Just in brief, let me summarize for you what has happened in the Windsor area concerning our health care. Let me tell you that on February 27 I brought forward a private member's resolution, which was passed in this House, which was quite historic, we felt, because it clearly called for several things which those who voted in favour of the bill clearly understood were not happening to date, and that is a reinvestment in health services in Ontario. While the government goes forward through this mock commission that they keep claiming is independent and we know is highly politicized, instead they have cut services across the board, and in particular, the one that has had the gravest of effects is the \$1.3-billion cut to hospitals.

Our member for Sarnia can relate to this, certainly the member for St Andrew-St Patrick can relate to that, and all the others across the way who have had hospitals scheduled for closure. I'd like to tell you just for a moment what it's like when health services are actually closed. Last Friday in Windsor the western campus of Windsor Regional Hospital closed the doors to the emergency room. What was very interesting as you drove by after 3:30 in the afternoon that Friday was that there were six posters, each a different colour, across the windows of the emergency room there, and on each poster was listed in various languages — which really speaks to the clientele who would be serviced by the emergency room. They had posters in Lebanese, posters in French, posters in Spanish, posters in Italian, and each one said — we're assuming all of them would find their way there, that they would read the posters and understand what that meant. We certainly have quite a mixed community in the west side of Windsor. We're assuming they understood that it was closing. You're assuming too that the advertising that was forced as an expenditure on the hospital to inform the public that it was closed, that they knew that not that day but on the following Monday a clinic would be opened, and that might relieve some of the pressure from the closure of the emergency room.

What this government did not do was ensure that according to plan in our community, the other two emergency rooms would be expanded to take the overflow from the emergency centre that was being shut down on that Friday. It did not happen, and today, a week and a half later, it still hasn't happened. So at about 2 am, let me share with you what the scene is like at Hotel Dieu hospital, right in the centre of the city of Windsor. We have five ambulances arrive, but there's no room at that emergency wing for all those ambulances to pull up, because it hasn't been expanded. There are only two ambulance bays, so only two ambulances at any one time have appropriate room to load the patient either on or off the ambulance.

Moreover, the hospital funding has been cut so severely that the other two emergency centres have not been staffed sufficiently, so you have fewer people working with more people, which would naturally result from closing the emergency room at the Western campus.

1710

This is a perfect example for our ability to tell the minister — even today in the House he stood up and he said, “You know, we’re listening,” and “We always respond to all the issues.” What a load of crap that was today. Can you imagine? We have called the minister’s office on a daily basis. We have written letters. We have sent postcards and petitions. The people of Essex county have spoken up and said, “For God’s sake, reinvest before you shut down the services.” This Conservative government has not done it.

Let me tell you, the only difference between Windsor and Essex county and where you live at home in your ridings is that you have simply had announcements so far. Just wait until the doors start to close, and you will see that this pattern is a familiar one that started in Windsor and Essex county and will continue right through Ontario. You are not reinvesting in services at the same time or before you are shutting down the hospital services, and it is folly.

Let me give you an example of some of the things our constituents are driven to do. This is only a part of the longest letter the Premier of Ontario is going to receive from the residents of Windsor and Essex county. You’ll find these banners all over my county of Windsor-Essex. It says, “Protect health care,” and we’ve got a number —

The Acting Speaker: I’m sorry, that’s out of order. It’s a demonstration. The member for Windsor-Sandwich will continue without the demonstration.

Mrs Pupatello: That’s some demonstration. I’ll tell you, it’s just the beginning, quite frankly, because things are getting worse, not better.

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: It’s always surprising to see that the member who comes from the Etobicoke region would be complaining. You know, the day we passed the private member’s resolution, in these balconies we had people who travelled from Etobicoke to be here to ensure that their member would vote in favour, but of course their member did not. I hope those people will remember that come election day.

There are a number of other items of interest. The member for St Catharines was mentioning this book earlier, *Shredding the Public Interest*. It’s quite curious that as late as today in the House here at Queen’s Park in the province of Ontario, who did we have as a visitor? The Minister of Health from Alberta. Why, how absolutely curious. In fact, this book written by Kevin Taft talks about the shredding of a significant document that the Albertans had prepared which showed that governments were being elected on the basis of lying to their people in Alberta. What they said was that the spending was wild and out of control in Alberta and, “We’ve got to cut, cut, cut,” and when their bureaucrats went to get the evidence of that, they found that wasn’t the case.

I was reminded immediately of our Minister of Education, Mr Snobelen, who said: “We have to invent a crisis. Tell the people. They will believe.”

Mr Ford: You are talking about a crisis in health.

Mrs Pupatello: What happened in Alberta was documented in quite a good manner, so I would suggest active reading, particularly the member from Etobicoke. That would save you having to chat while I’m trying to speak here. I found that quite interesting. In the meantime, in Windsor and Essex county we are still dealing with significant concerns.

You’ll find it of interest that I was out on Saturday afternoon canvassing with our candidate Gary McNamara in Windsor-Riverside. We have been waiting for a call, frankly. I think it’s the Conservative government’s responsibility to call a by-election in Windsor-Riverside. Why, they could have done it at the same time as the federal election and saved even more money. But I understand you’re having a little trouble finding a candidate. I just have one message for the Premier: Quit calling my canvassers and asking them to be your candidates. They’re saying no. I suppose you’ll call a by-election as soon as you find a candidate.

In the meantime, we were going down Lesperance Road Saturday afternoon, and at every door we knocked on we would talk to them about what they felt their issues were in Ontario today. Every time we spoke to an individual who looked 50 or over, every one of them mentioned health care. Do you know what one individual said to me? One gentleman who lives on Lesperance Road, Mr Manzone, said, “They ripped me off for three months of my drug coverage.”

This has been resonating, I know, in all your ridings. You, the Conservatives, made them pay an annual fee for this drug coverage. The annual started in July, but what they got just last month was another bill. It was three months early. They’re forced to pay it again. In essence, they’ve been ripped off for three months of coverage. That is where the government is finding the money to save. Can you imagine? Our seniors have for all their years paid into a system and now, as seniors, they’re being ripped off three months of drug coverage. I find it totally unacceptable.

In the meantime, I suggest good reading: *Shredding the Public Interest*. Think very clearly about what is currently happening to our health care system. The points our critic Gerard Kennedy made today about politicizing that commission are absolutely true. They are not at arm’s length. The Minister of Health can go to his own riding and guarantee the security of his own hospital, and then he can travel to Grey-Owen Sound and guarantee the security of rural hospitals in that area. But not once has he come to the table for Windsor-Essex county and guaranteed good services for the people of Essex county. That is completely unacceptable.

I’d like to mention youth jobs, which has been quite an issue in my area and I’m sure for many of the Conservative members as well. Your Minister of Education and Training traipsed out there to Aurora to make this grand announcement. He forgot to tell the people that he was cutting \$20 million from the youth jobs program. This, coming at a time when we have the highest levels of youth unemployment. We have more people who are not even looking for work any more, so if you included those numbers, over 30% of the young cannot find a job.

At this time, this minister, the same invent-a-crisis minister who has increased tuition fees by 20%, decided to announce a slashing of \$20 million in one of the most critical areas this government will ever have to contend with. We, as Liberals, have admitted this is clearly a priority. We have called for the ministers to sit down and do something that's at least innovative, proactive, much like our federal cousins have done with their program initiatives. But instead, they chose to cut \$20 million from the program. What they've essentially said to young people is, "Come on down to your local MPP and pick up one of these folders." The young people still have to go out and find the job. If they can find the job, they may or may not be eligible for a \$2 subsidy from the government.

One of the things they cancelled, which we thought was really simply not on and clearly not a good decision, was the Environmental Youth Corps. This was one of the programs of youth that's been out for some time, wildly successful, and for good reason. It did very good things. It had young people working to test water, soil and air pollution levels. We think that's highly relevant. When you come from Windsor and you've grown up in Windsor, you know that's a significant area of concern for people.

When you have a certain area of town where you wonder what kind of soot has fallen on the car overnight and you wonder what it is in the air we're breathing and you have serious concerns about water quality, when you live by the Detroit River, which has the largest number of barges to-ing and fro-ing along it, the environment is a significant concern.

So the government comes to us today and asks us for more money because they want to spend it on what? Not on the priority that is of the greater interest to the people of Ontario.

We sit in the heart of the Great Lakes. We have major concerns living along the Detroit River. Yet this minister, who has just finished traipsing around southern states telling them we don't know what, has slashed his ministry. He has closed the office of the environment in Windsor, one of the areas that he himself says has particular needs of the environment. Jim Drummond, who was an employee with the environment ministry for years, renowned in southwestern Ontario as an expert — you laid him off. Even today the Minister of Environment stood and said, "Even Windsor is a great concern." If it was such a concern, why did he shut down the office? It absolutely makes no sense and it clearly shows us that your priorities are completely backwards.

1720

Instead, you take the time to come forward in the House, use House time, and talk to us about regulating lobbyists. Why would the government choose to do that? If there's one thing you have been inundated with, it's lobbyists. You just need to be sure who they are and who they're speaking up for this time around. I'm going to go back to the firefighters of Ontario and say: "Hire a lobbyist. They clearly aren't listening to the firefighters."

We had a committee traipsing around Ontario talking about Bill 84, the intent of which is its toolkit. Why do municipalities need a toolkit that has anything to do with

firefighting? Because they've made such massive cuts to municipalities that they have to get the law in place to allow cities and towns to find ways to save money. How much money? Across Ontario, \$1 billion.

You'll recall early on that it was our finance critic, Gerry Phillips, who stood up immediately and said: "There's a \$1-billion gap here, \$1 billion that cities and towns need to find, and there's only one place they'll find it. That's on your property tax bill." When cities and towns and all those elected municipal people decide how they're going to fund fire services, this government hands them the tools to privatize fire service. I spoke with the fire chief in Knoxville, Tennessee, and he told me clearly, "When you privatize, you will lose quality of service."

Mike Harris came to Windsor, I grant, and he spent 25 minutes in the city of Windsor during the last campaign. As a matter of fact, I think the engine of the plane was left to run while he ran to the curb of the airport and stood there. I don't remember him talking about privatizing the fire service when he was on the curb for his 25 minutes in Windsor during the election campaign. He didn't say anything about that.

Here we have firefighters worried that they're going to be privatized, and with good reason. If it wasn't for the fact that where I come from, our local elected officials have a very high regard for the level and quality of fire service provided in the Windsor area, they might be more concerned. But we need to ensure that for all the people right across Ontario, they should all have the availability of good, high-quality fire service. I'll bet if he'd said, "We're going to privatize fire service," Premier Harris today would not be sitting on that side of the House.

Let me speak to you a moment about education, because this is becoming a very growing concern as the public understands just what the agenda is of this government in the area of education. I have very particular concern that in one committee, which has been cancelled for the last six weeks but we understand is on again tomorrow, we're discussing referenda and preparing government to bring in legislation on referenda.

I haven't ever seen anything so confusing as the discussion the government members have on referenda. Toronto and all the six municipalities in Toronto had a referendum and they were 76% opposed to amalgamating into one city. They had a referendum, but you refused to acknowledge it. The government loves to talk about citizen-driven referenda. Well, they had one of those in Hamilton, but it was completely disregarded by the government. Does the government want referenda or do they only want referenda on their terms?

Unfortunately, as we do much looking and reviewing and researching, we find that referenda as an issue — if you're thinking about Preston Manning right now, there's a good reason for that. He's making this a campaign issue: More power to the people, more choice for the electorate. What a lot of crap that is. Every organization or state or jurisdiction that has used referenda in their government has used them on their terms.

What will happen in Ontario if this government goes forward with referenda? They will then bring one forward in which you, the public, will give the government exactly the answer they're looking for. I am begging the

public to please call your local MPP and tell them you are not interested in these provincial binding referenda. Call on your local MPPs to do the job they were elected to do. I'll tell you, this is a very sexy message for the MPPs to be bringing across: "We're going to give you more choice. We're going to let you have your say." You will only have your say when they tell you you can have your say.

That is directly related to education, because once the government binds itself in terms of taxes, they will blame you, the public, for not allowing the appropriate levels of expenditure in education. The result of that will be another very horrific thought which is already percolating in the caucuses of the Conservative government, and that is the move to charter schools. Let me speak to every immigrant family in Ontario. If we ever move to a two-tier, charter school system in Ontario, we will ruin any opportunity for new Canadians, for young children at risk to have equal opportunity in this province.

Maybe the members themselves don't understand the magnitude of the use of referenda. I would suggest that they all come and sit in on our committee that is discussing that. We've given proof and we've asked many questions. The government refuses to answer them.

It is clearly linked to the right-wing movement that certainly exists in the Republicanesque thinking of southern states, certainly exists as a basis of the Reform Party. I know one of our colleagues earlier spoke of this Conservative government really being but a mask for what it truly is, and that is a Reform government. They have Reform-type thinking. They made a deal with the devil in the last election so that Reform members would not run in this election, because half the MPPs elected on that government side would have had two choices: run for Mike Harris, who thinks he's a Reformist, or run for the Reform Party. They made the deal.

Might I mention as a point of interest that if you have a close look, even when it's on the shelf, at the book *Shredding the Public Interest*, on first glance you could swear it looks like Mike Harris. It's not, it's Ralph Klein, but they're even starting to look alike. Now we should really be worried.

We hope to have much more opportunity to speak of this further. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Boyd: I must say, the passion and dedication of the member for Windsor-Sandwich is never in question and we are never unsure of what she really thinks. She's brought out a lot of comments this afternoon in terms of the way this government is spending its money and the reason those of us in the opposition are reluctant to simply let an interim supply bill pass without commenting on some of the decisions this government is making.

As for the member for St Catharines, he always presents a very pointed point of view. I enjoyed his comments about the Fraser forum edition, talking about the kind of doubletalk that has become so familiar with this right-wing government, the questions: Are we threatening the environment by overprotecting it? Are we threatening our schools by overpaying our teachers, by having too small classes? Are we threatening our medical system by having too many services available to people?

These are the kinds of rhetorical questions these Tories are asking all the time, and it is appropriate for those of us who are trying to protect the public interest to expose the duplicitous nature of those kinds of questions and to really expose the kinds of code words that mean, "Cut, cut, cut, so we can give tax increases to our good friends in the upper echelons of the income brackets."

As for the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, he probably, of all of us in this House, has the best grasp of what the government is really doing with its money and not doing with its money. He always presents a very incisive view to all of us when it has to do with the spending of public finances.

I want to commend all the members from the opposition party for their comments this afternoon. They have certainly gone a long way to exposing this government's duplicity.

Mr Michael Brown: I feel compelled to comment on the speeches by the members for Scarborough-Agincourt, St Catharines and Windsor-Sandwich as they very articulately put forward some of the shortcomings of the government's fiscal and social policy.

A couple of things are of particular concern to my constituents. One of those would be the state of health care, and particularly I think the state of long-term care in the constituency. There is great difficulty throughout the constituency understanding how municipalities will be able to take care of the elderly and the sick under the down-loading program of the government, which will force municipalities to pay 50% of the cost of long-term care. We clearly, in a constituency such as Algoma-Manitoulin, do not have the resources to properly look after these folks, and we're already seeing difficulties at Manitoulin Centennial Manor and the other facilities throughout the constituency. I just want to flag that as something the government is going to have to pay more attention to.

1730

But I want to speak particularly about the infrastructure program, because the infrastructure program that this government turned down, the Conservative government turned down, had been accepted by nine other provinces. Everybody else thought it was all right, but Mike Harris didn't. That is a very significant and important program. Ask the township of the Spanish River that has a bridge out, that can't replace the bridge. They need the infrastructure program to be able to do that. If you ask any of the other municipalities, they would have necessary projects that they can't do because the infrastructure program is not there and the funding that they used to receive from the provincial government evaporated long ago. I just want the government to reconsider and get our projects done.

Mr Pouliot: I too would agree and would like to commend the members of the official opposition, those for Windsor-Sandwich, St Catharines and Scarborough-Agincourt. The policies of the government are responsible for evoking such passion and in some cases, yes, hatred from members in all communities in Ontario, in all walks of life.

It's obvious that in a period of less than two years what we have been subjected to, all 11 million people in this great, vast and magnificent province, is a true revolu-

tion, a revolution that has spared hardly anyone, where the light at the end of the tunnel is that of a freight train, led by members of the First Brigade, and you will see them on a daily basis occupying the front benches, with the help of another cohort, their friends the rich and the powerful. Need you go to a hospital? Need you guide your sons and daughters at primary and post-secondary school? You know a neighbour in need of social assistance? We know a widow in need of prescribed drugs. Every one of them has taken a hit, some small-time, others rather big-time, deliberately, systematically, to satisfy the insatiable appetite of those who can run and distance themselves from the field.

Especially the middle class and the youth will tell you to a person that they fear, that they know, that the system that is being put to them is provocative and hurtful.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): The old maxim: No supply without an address of grievance, and my grievance today is for those thousands of rural constituents who are increasingly concerned about the impact of the Harris government's fiscal policy, particularly the so-called Who Does What offloading policy and its impact on services, for example, like land ambulances. Earlier today I raised a question because this weekend I met with a number of municipal and business people who are absolutely horrified at what they believe will happen to a vital health service, namely, land ambulances, under this new scheme of things. I'm glad to see the member for Wellington here, because he'll have some understanding of the particular situation that people in Renfrew face.

We are going to see over the next few months the transfer of the complete funding responsibility for land ambulances from the province to local government, and at the same time as that's occurring we are seeing an increased interest from big corporate private players like Laidlaw and Rural/Metro. The question that people in places like Denbigh and Bancroft and Barry's Bay and Beachburg, and I suspect in places like Mount Forest and Ayton and Alma, will want to know is, how many new user charges are sick people going to face under this new scheme of things? There is no doubt in the minds of my local officials that this new plan is going to mean, particularly in rural and northern Ontario, a reduction in service, a disintegration and a fracturing of service delivery, and without doubt a sharp increase in the number and range of user fees for ambulance services.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Response? Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I want to thank the members for London Centre, Lake Nipigon, Algoma and Renfrew North for their very thoughtful interventions this afternoon in response to the outstanding address by the member for Windsor-Sandwich and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, and my modest contribution as well.

I want to say that they would all be interested by the response of Bob Vanwingerden, who has written a letter to the St Catharines Standard today in which he has lamented the loss of the Senior Citizens Consultants organization, of which he has been a long-time dedicated member and worker. I've known Bob for years and years, and his commitment to senior citizens in our community, along with those who worked at Senior Citizens Consul-

tants Inc, cannot be questioned. They have lost funding and have not been able to carry on, and therefore a growing number of people in our society, the senior citizens in our society — keeping in mind that St Catharines-Niagara has the most people over 55 per capita of anywhere in the country — all of these people will be the losers as a result.

I notice that each of the members is concerned about health care and other issues that have been forthcoming and alarmed that the government is pressing ahead with a very unwise tax cut while at the same time cutting essential services in the province. Not only the closing of hospitals, but where there's an existing situation, such as in Windsor-Sandwich, where the emergency care is not what it should be, we recognize that the Mulroney cuts which started a few years ago have had their damage and we're now seeing this happening within the purview of the provincial government of Mike Harris.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Pouliot: I would with respect ask that we, as is the custom, split the time of the third party. I must seek unanimous consent to do so.

The Speaker: Who would you like to split it with?

Mr Pouliot: The member for London Centre, sir.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to split the time? Agreed.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before we begin, my colleague deserves a quorum in order to do this very important speech.

The Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker. *The Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon.

1740

Mr Pouliot: I wish to thank the members from the government, with their huge majority, who have chosen to return. I see two of them who have just been demoted. In other words, they've lost their responsibility, that of parliamentary assistant, and also a full \$11,000, but when you serve the general public, money is secondary, so it doesn't hurt them as much. The reason they were demoted — it's not a secret to anyone; the papers were full of it — is because they dared say no, they dared put the welfare of their constituents ahead of the party line, ahead of the Common Sense Revolution, ahead of the mantra. They didn't follow the boss. They were told: "He's the man. You do as you're told. Otherwise, we will just cut your chance for promotion within the system." I understand some forward rumour has it that some furniture is about to disappear from offices; they're being relocated to a smaller cubicle in some cases, as far away as possible from the influence pool, if you wish. I want to wish them well.

They stood like members of the First Brigade often do. The problem is, with members of the First Brigade, people speak very highly of them, but they're all dead. So I wish some would follow — not die. I mean in the political context; let's get things straight. But they're here, stooping to get to a quorum call so the House can be duly constituted. You need 20 members. They have 82

members: no big deal. With the map that you produced so gallantly this afternoon here, Mr Speaker, they shouldn't have any problems finding the House. Oxygen will be supplied automatically. Exits, like the Speaker has said, etc. The place is large enough to wheel in the food trays if need be. But you can be here even if you're semi-comatose to listen to the debate from opposition members as well. Still to this day they can have the right to express the views of their constituents, the philosophies of their party.

A mere three days before the cheques can be cut, the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier, tables a motion so that the money can flow from the coffers of the province to the agencies, to the commissions, to health care, inclusive of all perimeters: health again, education. Two weeks ago we reminded them of the pending situation, that the motion would have to be tabled and the opposition would have to debate and offer some constructive criticism vis-à-vis the finances of the province of Ontario, but they did not listen.

Ontario Finances, 1996-97, third quarter, quarterly update, December 31, 1996, originating in the Ontario Ministry of Finance, an official document prepared and presented by the Ministry of Finance, sanctioned, endorsed, signed by his minister, Mr Ernie Eves. Highlights, 1996-97, and we're looking at in-year performance. I'm quoting from their official record: The revenues are at \$47.8 billion. That's the money coming in from all sources to the provincial coffers. The expenditures, the expense: \$54.9 billion.

You have a gap between \$47.8 billion coming in and you're spending \$54.9 billion, yet you have the misguidance, the audacity to go and borrow. If this government keeps its ideology for the next five or 10 years, most of us will find ourselves in the poorhouse. What you have here is a government that spends, spends and spends again. What they've done is they're spending more money this year, in spite of all the cuts, than they did the previous year. Again, I'm quoting from the official document, the Ontario Finances from the Ministry of Finance: Total expenses at \$54.852 billion up — get this — \$662 million from the budget plan and up \$644 million from second-quarter results, mainly due to an increased allocation to the restructuring fund. The restructuring fund is the transition money; it's a bit of the payola, the one-time reward for what's about to happen in Ontario.

The way things are done is about to change dramatically. The Ontario that was known for 50 years, 40 years, 10 years ago, will cease to exist because the revolution marches on. This caravan of misery, this lot of gloom and doom will make sure the right people, people who have the ability to run faster, people who have the means, get their due reward. In the meantime, we will experience an erosion of the middle class seldom experienced, seldom seen before, deliberately, systematically.

Oh, I know the government will say: "The Liberals in Ottawa, the federal Liberals, are cutting us, costing the province some \$2.8 billion, \$3 billion. We're not getting those transfer payments, so what's a government to do? What are we to do?" So they have a caucus, a few of them assemble, sometimes it's at the Albany Club, the

Toronto Club, with advisers, with people in the know. Then they have the man, the Premier, who must make the decisions on behalf of the province, and the government spin doctors, those merchants of fear, will go across the province saying: "We're not cutting health care. It's not true. We haven't cut health care."

If you have a relative who should be in a ward or in a semiprivate or is fortunate enough to be in a private room, you might find her or him in the corridor. We've had a person, an Ontario citizen, being visited by his family and the person passed away the night before, the person is dead, dead, dead. Yet the cuts keep coming. Classrooms: "Oh, no, we have not impacted. We're spending the same money on education. We're spending the same money at the hospitals."

We can see with our very eyes, we can feel the anxiety, we listen to the fear. We know that if you're small you get smaller; you don't have much of a voice, you're not going to get a lot of money from the tax cut. If you make a commendable salary, if you make more than \$100,000 a year, then you will see more money in your pocket. The more you make, the more you will see. But if you put your paycheque, your net pay, on the table every two weeks, when you and your spouse talk about the family finances, you're trying to stay alive, you'll be hard-pressed to see the difference.

You would have noticed the difference if you were getting a decrease in the provincial sales tax, so when you go to the marketplace you could say: "Well, it looks pretty good now. There's 1% six months after. There's 2% less I'm paying for the goods I buy." That would make a lot of sense, but they would say: "It's regressive. We cannot have this. Let's make it progressive: The richer you are, the more you make." But if you're a small consumer, an average consumer, poor, middle class, the elderly, well, get off the track because the train is on its way and it will not spare you.

We have a difficult choice to make: those who are powerful, those who have more, or the middle class, the average people. Mike Harris and the gang are moving up the food chain — they're like Pac-Man — to satisfy the \$5.4 billion in tax cuts. Does it make sense to have revenues of \$47.8 billion, your expenses are \$54.9 billion and you must find \$5.4 billion to give your friends?

1750

It's like you, Mr Speaker, if you were to lose your senses, without resource, and the credit cards, Visa, MasterCard — plastic — would come to your place via your mail system and it would say: "Dear Mr Speaker: You have exceeded your credit limit. You've charged too much." And you would say: "Well, it's time for a party. It's time to raise the credit limit." Even with the commendable salary that you take in, you would be hard-pressed. Even a person like yourself, with the uniform included as part of your mandate, with a very plush office, I understand — I've never been there — would be hard-pressed and people would be surprised, the dean of the House would be surprised, that you had gone over your credit limit. You certainly would not go and borrow. It would be unwise indeed.

The government would have us believe that we're now experiencing, that we're now benefiting from a substan-

tial recovery, that consumer confidence is up, that people are spending — although they're not saving a lot, we know that — that consumer supreme has returned to the marketplace.

The government would have us believe it's the best recovery for the past six or seven years, and yet I have with me an official document from the government of Ontario, Ontario Labour Market Economic Conditions. This is for February 14 this year; it's recent. It talks about youth labour markets. Those are people, young men and young women, between the ages of 15 and 24. Shocking. They're saying it's a recovery, things are getting better, but if you're between the ages of 15 and 24 the youth unemployment rate in January 1997 was 18.6%, up 2.3% from January 1996. The seasonally adjusted Ontario youth unemployment rate in January was 16.8%, up 0.5% from December 1996.

They're not doing their job. They don't care. This is the future of Ontario. This is in official statistics. It does not include people who have given up, people who are not a statistic. You're going up to 25%, 26%, 27%, people who want to be like you, people who want a chance, people who want to be like the others. They want to integrate themselves in the community. They want to buy goods. They want to look to the future with confidence. You don't do it with 25% unemployment among the young people.

Premier, go and tell them there's a recovery and see the reaction you get. Go and tell them things are getting better when they're not working, many of them with a degree. What kind of a legacy?

Mr Speaker, as I talk to you, I can see the pain in the faces of the pages here, because when they get to be, and it's soon enough, they too — will it be you, will it be you and/or your friend who will be on the dole, lining up, trying to get a job or even a part-time, a jobette?

This is not the kind of recovery you're entitled to. The person responsible for education, the crisis management centre in one person, is cutting money from the classroom, cutting money from education, so that fewer people will have the tools, will be equipped to participate, to defend themselves, to integrate in our modern society.

That's the legacy of this government: splitting up society, targeting without any thought to a human dimension. You must govern for all Ontarians, not just those who have more — they can well defend themselves — not those you meet at the club, not those you meet as president of a major chamber of commerce but all people. Those who have less and are asking for a chance, those who believe they can have a full share in tomorrow's economy, those who are there, those who are post-working, the retirees, all those people must have a say, not only a few select groups because it has been decreed that we will have a big, bold move to the right.

Tomorrow when we resume this debate to give the okay to the government to fork over the money, to shell out the people's money — it's their money — to give it

back to agencies, or they'll take some cuts with a tax cut —

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Maybe we won't give them the okay.

Mr Pouliot: Maybe we won't. The dean of the House, the most respected person in this assembly, and rightly so, a former minister of the crown, a former Deputy Premier, is saying, "Maybe we won't." But if we do, because we're here to cooperate — we're all in this together although they're giving us a bad name. They're giving politicians an even worse reputation; not an easy task, but they've succeeded because they shoot to kill, because they spare no one in their agenda. They are incapable of changing their minds as circumstances change.

There is so much to say, there are so many positive alternatives to present, yet as always nothing stops the march of time. There is so little time. Do I still have three minutes, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr Pouliot: I have with me the document that was presented on June 2, 1995, during the course of the last election, when they were soliciting, when they were asking people for their votes, "Gimme, gimme." The election took place, as we know, on June 8 of the same year, six days after. It has, "Al Leach: Common Sense for a Change." This is what he was peddling, what he was presenting to people, trying to get the X in the right place beside "Mr Leach."

"To homeowners in Cabbagetown, Moore Park and Rosedale:

"Unlike Tim Murphy" — I guess Murphy was the Liberal candidate — "I own a home and" — underlined — "live in the riding of St George-St David. My party and I will never support the imposition of market value assessment in Metro Toronto."

Mr Bradley: Who said that?

Mr Pouliot: Al Leach.

Then you will want to hear this. This is what page 2 says, as I conclude — the member for St Catharines will want to hear this — "Liberals Milk Metro Dry." "When the Liberals were in power, they treated all taxpayers, but particularly Metro's, like cash cows. They increased taxes 33 times in five years." This is Leach saying that these people here, the Liberals, didn't do their job and they were abusing people. "Mike Harris will relieve upward pressure on property taxes by stopping the downloading of mandates on municipalities." He's not going to download; he's going to stop it. Talk about a volte-face. Talk about a change of heart. Talk about the veil of hypocrisy. Some will say talk about the big lie to get the vote. I'm not the one saying this, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: We are closing in on the end of the day and you must withdraw that comment.

Mr Pouliot: I will certainly withdraw the comment.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 avril 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Minister of Northern Development and it is about his silence while he and his government download services to northern municipalities.

Minister, I have here an estimate of the cost of your downloading to the taxpayers of the township of Golden. The bottom line for Golden residents will be an increase of \$1,115,557 because of this minister's dumping. This is in a small community with a population of 2,183 residents in 921 households.

A few more examples: The town of Fort Frances can expect a 58% increase in their mill rate thanks to the inaction of the minister; the township of Jaffray Melick, a 60% increase; Ignace, 102%. I can go on and on.

Minister, you stated in the document *A Voice for the North*, "No new mandates will be enacted upon municipalities unless appropriate funding is allocated." I say again to the minister that due to his lack of interest and his inaction, northern residents will be forced to pay higher taxes because of his dumping of services.

The results aren't good. I and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, will be taking the results of a survey done by our northern municipal critic, Rick Bartolucci. Again I tell you the results aren't good, and I'm sure you're about to hear from every northern municipality, should you be in attendance.

In closing, Minister, all I can say is that I hope this information that you bring back to the Premier doesn't lead to your firing as it did to your parliamentary assistant.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): As if it's not enough that we have a government with the worst environmental record in Ontario's history, now we're asked to endure the delirious ravings of the Minister of Environment. I refer to his op-ed piece in last Wednesday's *Windsor Star*. Oh, the minister sings a happy little song about how his government is not deregulating but reregulating. The minister asks if we need rules that make no sense and then goes on to offer up a couple of the most spurious examples, as if to suggest that all environmental regulation is just red tape, which seems to be a particular fetish of this government.

But that's not what this is about. That's a shameful smokescreen for the fact that this government has undertaken a radical, systematic dismantling of environmental protection and they've done it behind closed doors. If you won't listen to me, will you listen to the Environmental Commissioner, who warns that "ministries are...eliminating environmental safeguards behind closed doors" and who warns that the quality of our drinking water is being compromised by the actions of this government?

You haven't fooled the auditor, the Ombudsman, the Environmental Commissioner, health and environmental organizations, you haven't fooled the media, you haven't fooled the opposition and you most decidedly haven't fooled the people of Ontario.

We will continue to expose this government's environmental agenda for the shameful travesty that it is. They are loosening and eliminating environmental laws, closing down air and water quality monitoring stations, and on and on. It's shameful.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY MEDICAL PROGRAM

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): McMaster University, in my riding of Hamilton West, has once again been recognized at the international level. Newsweek magazine is the latest periodical to attest to the world-class standards and innovations of McMaster University's medical program. McMaster University is the only medical school listed by Newsweek in its list of six schools. The Newsweek article describes McMaster as "the granddaddy of alternative medical education," and indeed it is.

In 1965, when the university president, Dr Harry Thode, and founding dean, Dr John Evans, opened the program, they envisioned a teaching centre that would be at the forefront of research and medical service initiatives. Twenty-two years later, that is exactly what Hamilton enjoys in the McMaster medical program: a program that draws students from around the world for the highest standard of medical training available today.

It is an honour for me, as the member for Hamilton West, to salute McMaster for its recognition in a featured article in Newsweek, and I know members join me in applauding the staff and medical students who have made this program what it is today and for leading the way for other medical institutions to follow.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): How many deaths and injuries in the workplace does it take to get the Harris government to realize that worker health and safety is important?

Yesterday during the national day of mourning, the community gathered at civic square and at the Steelworkers hall in Sudbury to try and figure out how any government could think about doing away with the world-renowned Occupational Disease Panel when as many as 6,000 Ontario workers die each year because of occupational disease.

We wonder how any government can seriously consider doing away with mandatory inquests into mining and construction workplace fatalities when 204 workers were killed in 1996.

We also wonder how any government can downplay the importance of health and safety in the workplace when there were more than 2.35 million workdays lost to the Ontario economy in 1996 due to occupational injuries, illness and death.

The barrier tape I have is no ordinary barrier tape. It has on it the X-rays of those who have been injured and died in the workplace.

I would like a page to bring it over to the Minister of Labour. Let her look at the broken hands, the cracked ribs, the fractured legs, the crushed skulls, the diseased lungs, and then maybe, just maybe, she will ensure that mandatory inquests take place and that the Occupational Disease Panel remains.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Parents and educators and students across Niagara, indeed across this province, live in daily fear for the future of their children, for our communities, our society and for the quality public education generations of Ontarians have built over the past decades, as they witness the gutting of public education by this government as it defunds public schools in Niagara and across Ontario, and as with its Bill 104 it eliminates local governance of education, and as it embarks on its orgy of privatization of essential and traditionally public services.

People like Alice Garon point out that "support staff jobs are the links of the chain that hold the board of education together," that "our future depends upon a well-educated populace, but with oversized classes, our students are paying far too much for the cutbacks that just go on and on and on" — this government's cuts, this government's attacks on quality public education.

Diane Trottier writes this: She thinks education is very important to our future in French as well as in English. These same people fear for the future of French-language education in this province and very much so in the Niagara region, where generations have worked, and worked hard, to build quality French-language education.

Andre Demers says this: "Each and every day I am constantly helping numerous students in a multitude of different chores." You see, he's a custodian, and his job is going to be privatized. This is a cruel and vicious and criminal attack on public education in the province of Ontario.

BLOOD DONATION

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I rise today to call the attention of all members of this Legislature to a

critical need in this province. There is danger of a critical blood shortage in Ontario.

It was reported over the Easter weekend that some hospitals could not have accommodated one more blood transfusion, their supply was so low.

Every 20 seconds in Canada, somebody needs blood. In central Ontario, 700 blood donors are needed each weekday to meet patient requirements in 61 area hospitals. Sixty per cent of Canadians will require blood or blood products in their lifetime, yet only 4% of us donate blood.

The Red Cross is providing the invaluable service of collecting blood donations. The Red Cross uses new, sterile equipment on each donor, so there's no risk of contracting disease through donating blood.

I'll be hosting a Red Cross donor clinic at the Eglinton Square Shopping Centre in Scarborough on May 13. I'd like to thank the merchants and the property manager of Eglinton Square.

Sadly, the need for blood increases on holiday weekends, and with the upcoming Victoria Day weekend, hospitals will again experience a strain on their blood supply. The Red Cross desperately needs donors to ensure that transfusions are available.

I am proud to support this excellent organization and urge all of my colleagues in the Legislature to get involved with their local chapter of the Canadian Red Cross. Few organizations better reflect the Canadian tradition of voluntarism and of helping others in need.

1340

RACE RELATIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise today to raise an issue of concern, I hope to all members of the Legislature, and that has to do with race relations in the province of Ontario.

My view of Canada is that it's like a flower garden and Canada has been fortunate to attract the best flowers from around the world to come and join with our first flower. But like every flower garden, weeds creep into it, and there is a weed called racism that all of us have to step up and make sure we tackle.

I'm concerned because the government, in at least two instances, has decided to cut back on its support for this area. One is in the Ministry of Education, where the division that was handling that I gather is now essentially gone. The other is in the Ministry of Citizenship, where the Anti-Racism Secretariat is essentially gone. I was struck as I was out on the weekend by a paper that had a headline "Hate Goes to High School."

I say to all of us that if we do not focus on this area — our high schools do a terrific job on this, but they can't do it alone. I'm just alerting all of us that the government is shortsighted in trying to find money in this area. I think the government should reconsider its priorities. This is one area where, in my opinion, we cannot allow it to begin to fester.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): The Honourable John Snobelen began his career as Minister

of Education and Training in this province by speaking to ministry staff and saying, "We need to invent a crisis." Invent a crisis? Well, he has done that. With the cuts in funding to education, with the trial balloons, with all the upheaval around changing local governance, with all the pressures on the system that were already there and all the changes that are being speculated about, parents and educators and students are all concerned about the future of education.

On Friday I attended a meeting of several hundred elementary school teachers in the city of East York. They were very disappointed that their own elected representatives didn't show up. They had invited the Honourable Dave Johnson over a month ago and unfortunately his office didn't even respond. John Parker, the member for York East, said the day before that he would be there and then called and left a message 20 minutes before the meeting saying he wouldn't be there. No one was there from the government to explain, to defend, to talk to educators about their very real concerns about what is happening in the classroom and about the quality of education for our youngest kids in the classroom, the deterioration they see and what they fear.

It is incumbent upon the government that is making such change at such breakneck speed to get out there and talk to people, let them know what's happening, give them the answers, help them understand your changes.

BILL WARRENDER

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I rise today to honour the life of a great man, Bill Warrender, who recently passed away in Hamilton at the age of 88. Mr Warrender was a long-time family friend of one of my constituency staff.

It seems Bill Warrender was always representing his fellow citizens in Hamilton and indeed this province. He served as a controller, alderman and mayor of Hamilton. After serving in the RCAF during the Second World War, he entered provincial politics as a Tory MPP for Hamilton Centre. Bill Warrender served with premiers Frost and Robarts, holding four cabinet portfolios, including Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill Warrender, a distinguished lawyer, was appointed to the bench in 1963 and worked in the small claims and district courts for 21 years. He was also awarded an honorary doctorate of laws degree from his alma mater, McMaster University. Ontario Court of Justice Walter Stayshyn said, "He was a truly fine gentleman with a great love of people."

Bill Warrender, as the first chairman, was instrumental in the formation of Mohawk College. It was said he transformed Mohawk College from a single building on Wentworth Street into a modern miracle of education. Bill Warrender's son, William Robert, said although his dad was known as a great public figure, he was a great dad and a great person to emulate.

I ask all members of this assembly to pause and remember a true gentleman, friend and father, Bill Warrender, who gave a lifetime of service to his fellow citizens in Hamilton and the province.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to bring to your attention on a point of order what I believe is a breach of the standing orders, particularly standing order 106(g), which deals with the power by the standing committee on government agencies to review the intended appointments of persons to agencies, boards and commissions and of directors to corporations in which the crown in the right of Ontario is a majority shareholder.

The specific breach I want to bring to your attention, Speaker, and ask you to rule on is that I believe the government, particularly I guess through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, is in breach of that standing order by virtue of not having submitted to that committee the review of the intended appointees to two bodies which are to come into effect as a result of the passage of Bill 103.

You will recall that under Bill 103 there were two bodies to be set up, one of them being the transition team and the other being the financial advisory board.

The specific reference in the bill sets out very clearly with respect to the transition team, under sections 16(1) and 16(2) of the legislation, and section 16(1) reads, "There shall be a transition team consisting of one or more members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; the Lieutenant Governor in council may designate one of the members as chair"; and then in (2), "The transition team is a body corporate."

A similar provision in section 9, subsections (1) and (2), deals with the financial advisory board, "There shall be a financial advisory board consisting of one or more members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; the Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate one of the members as chair," and (2) "The financial advisory board is a body corporate."

You have in the legislation, Speaker, two very clear designations of two bodies, the members of which are to be appointed by order in council, and two bodies which are made by the legislation to be bodies corporate; corporations therefore.

I want to bring to your attention that earlier this week, both yesterday with respect to the financial advisory board and on Friday with respect to the transition team, we had the release of the names of the people the government intends to appoint to those bodies. We also received late yesterday afternoon the certificate which was sent to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and then obviously from there to the clerk of the standing committee on government agencies, which sets out the intended appointees to the various agencies, boards and commissions, under the signature of the Premier of decisions made at the last cabinet meeting, where I understand these appointments were made, and that certificate does not include the names of these individuals.

I then want to bring your attention again, Speaker, to standing order 106(g), which as I read out earlier indicates that among the roles the standing committee on government agencies has is the role to review the intended appointments of persons to agencies, boards and

commissions and of directors to corporations in which the crown in right of Ontario is a majority shareholder.

I would submit to you that one of these bodies is a board as set out under the standing order; the other is a corporation as set out under the standing order. In both cases there is an obligation, not a discretion as I believe the government will argue, but an obligation from the government to send the names of those intended appointees through the review process.

In this case that has not been done, although I find it interesting as a parallel, but it's only a parallel, that in a similar situation with respect to the body that's the equivalent of these two bodies under Bill 104, the Education Improvement Commission, the names of the chairs of that body were in fact sent through the process.

I would just submit to you, sir, that the government in not submitting these names is infringing on the standing orders as I understand them and would ask you to rule on that either today or at some point at your convenience.

1350

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, to respond to the members opposite, the NDP set up the process in the past in which short-term appointments of one year or less were not reviewed by the standing committee. There are numerous examples of key NDP appointments which followed the short-term system and were not reviewed by the standing committee.

Anne Golden and the members of her task force, for example, were not reviewed by the committee and they were appointed for a year and a half. John Sweeney was appointed by the NDP for the education task force that took several years; that was not reviewed by the panel. John Sewell was appointed to redo the Planning Act, which took three years, and he was not reviewed by the committee.

I could also say with respect to the panel for the education task force that they are more of a permanent appointment. Their appointments are for four years, not short-term; a four-year appointment, which is considered long-term. The transition team is being appointed for seven months, which we consider to be short-term and therefore not subject to review by the committee.

Mr Silipo: Just briefly, in reply to the point made by the minister, Speaker, I would say to you in considering this point that it may very well be that in the past certain appointments have not gone through the process. That's by virtue of the fact that nobody complained about that process being followed.

What I'm saying to you is that in my view the standing orders are clear: They require that those intended appointees in fact go through the process. There is no other standing order that supersedes the standing order. It comes down to what is in the standing order and how that is interpreted and then applied. I believe it can only be interpreted in a way that says intended appointees have to be made subject to that review process.

The minister may be correct that in some cases in the past they have not. There may indeed be ones in the life of this government that may have gone through and I or others have not seen them or not objected to them. But the point is that the standing order is what needs to be

applied. I'm bringing that to your attention today and would ask you to take a look at that and rule on that.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Just to reinforce the comments of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Speaker, it's certainly our contention that the previous government under the NDP set up a process, and I think this is the key aspect here, in which short-term appointments of one year or less were not reviewed by the standing committee. The minister has given examples of that.

Further, I would say, strengthening that again, the previous government revised the standing orders to ensure that appointments were reviewed by the standing committee on government agencies. However, the practice under their government was not to review reappointments, appointments of civil servants and short-term appointments of one year or less. Certainly the transition team is being appointed for less than a year, at eight months.

Some of the examples the minister has alluded to that fit within that practice were Anne Golden, John Sweeney, also Gerry Caplan — I'm not sure he mentioned Gerry Caplan — and Monique Bégin on the Royal Commission on Learning, Lynn Williams on the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation, Frank Clifford on the Ontario College of Teachers implementation committee, and John Sewell, I think he mentioned, on the Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario. So there are any number of examples that allude to the practice that was put in place by the former government in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thanks, to the member for Dovercourt, the municipal affairs minister and the government House leader. I'll reserve; I think I'll be able to report back probably very shortly, tomorrow I would think.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the minister responsible for women's issues, I want to go to the Deputy Premier.

I want to raise with you the issue of violence against women in Ontario and what your government has done to women. You may be aware that this morning a new study was released confirming that the number of Ontario women who are being murdered by their husbands or boyfriends is on the rise. We are also already aware of the fact that the number of incidents of violence against women in Ontario is on the rise.

Minister, you will shortly be drafting a budget. In that budget, as you are well aware, you will not only be giving a statement of account, you'll be giving a very real expression to the values you hold dear as government. I want to ask you, in light of this new, fresh evidence of violence against women in Ontario, are you going to restore the millions of dollars in cuts that you've already made to women's programs?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the leader of the official opposition, he knows full well that I can't tell him what's going to be in the budget next Tuesday. He's going to have to wait to see what it is.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): You don't know.

Hon Mr Eves: That could be true too, I say to the member for Algoma, in some cases.

However, with respect to this specific study that he's talking about, he will know that the study was done covering the period of time from 1991 to 1994. We certainly take this issue very seriously. Governments now of all three political stripes in this province have struggled with this very important problem. There are several initiatives that this government is undertaking. We're spending about \$100 million this year directed towards assisting women in our society here in Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: The minister says that on behalf of his government he takes the issue of violence against women very seriously. Let me tell you how seriously he takes it. He has scrapped the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues; he has cut \$5 million from the women's issues portfolio; he has stolen \$1.6 million from programs designed to help those women who find themselves in need of protection.

Minister, once again I'm going to ask you: In the grand scheme of things, where are your priorities when it comes to women's issues and violence against women? We know that you are extremely committed to a tax cut. We know that you are very much committed to reducing government costs in Ontario. I want to ask you — just answer this directly, then — when you compare those two things against violence against women, where do women factor into that? As you well know, they're not here today. They're silent victims. Where is it that you stand on violence against women?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition will know, of course, of the initiatives this government has undertaken in the past few months. They include passing a Victims' Bill of Rights; establishing and identifying protecting specific rights for victims of crime, many of whom are women; establishing the victim notification system, the automated information and referral service; establishing a \$10.2-million victims' justice fund to provide services to victims of crime, unfortunately predominantly women in our society today; \$11 million reinvested in nine shelters, facilities for women; and launching two new domestic court pilot projects in the city of Toronto and North York to deal solely with domestic assault cases. Those are some of the initiatives that our government has taken in the past few months.

Mr McGuinty: There is a massive human deficit that is mounting in this province. You have become fixated in an unhealthy way with the fiscal deficit at the expense of people in this province. When you cut 24-hour crisis intervention hotlines, human costs add up. When you cut community counselling services, human costs add up. When you cut programs to help women from returning to abusive situations, human costs add up.

I have raised with the Minister of Community and Social Services the fact that you have stolen \$17 million

from Ontario's children's aid societies. I'm now raising with you directly the fact that you have taken approximately \$10 million, unreturned, from programs designed to help women who are victims of violence.

1400

You've got the money for a tax cut that's going to total nearly \$5 billion, but you can't come up with the paltry sums necessary to provide protection to children and women in Ontario who are the victims of violence. Minister, will you return that funding in your budget?

Hon Mr Eves: To the leader of the official opposition, first of all, he and other members in his party repeatedly say that the tax cut is costing the province \$6 billion.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Well, it did, five billion.

Hon Mr Eves: Five billion, then. The reality is, as he knows, that revenue in the province is up this year — not down \$5 billion, up \$1.2 billion, despite the fact that we reduced taxes.

I don't know what his definition of "upper-income Ontarians" is, but I can tell him that fully 61% of that tax cut goes to people making between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year. If that's your definition of an upper-income Ontarian, then yours is very different than mine and, I must say, very different from the rest of society's.

I might also say that under the Who Does What exercise, we have assumed the entire responsibility for funding of women's services. We will make sure that they are protected. We are spending almost \$100 million —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, please come to order.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Solicitor General. It has to do with the Ipperwash affair and the role the government played in it.

I want to be clear on what the government says its role was in it. The Premier has said, "At no time...was there any direction given by any political staff or any politicians as to what the OPP should do or how they should carry out their job." He went on to say, "There were no files, there were no records, because we had no involvement."

Can you confirm, Minister, that it's the government's position that there was no involvement and the OPP operated with no government input, direction or advice?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I can confirm that. Certainly that's been the position of the government and it continues to be the position that it is an accurate assessment of the situation. In fact, although I have not spoken to the commissioner, I noted in the press clippings today, which are circulated and made available to all members, that the commissioner is quoted in one of the print media today repeating his position that there was no "political pressure from Queen's Park to get tough with the demonstrators."

Mr Phillips: I will say we have a different opinion from the minister. The log at the Ipperwash police

command post paints quite a different picture. I will read you a few quotes from that log. This is Mr Beaubien, your member, the Conservative member, who was at the command post: "The inspector questioned, 'Is there anything from the Solicitor General?' Mr Beaubien advised, 'Well, they're meeting today.'"

The commanding officer states — and this, by the way, is the day of the shooting — because the mayor raised some questions about the residents: "The Premier and the Solicitor General want to deal with this. There's an interministerial meeting this morning to deal with it." At another point — this was the day before — from the command police headquarters, "There is a conference call going on with your committee here at Queen's Park."

The question is this: How can you reconcile what the Premier has said with what these police logs show?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think the member is making a long reach, as he frequently does, with respect to this issue. I think it was clearly indicated, it's been made public on a number of occasions with respect to the committee established to deal with these kinds of situations formed by the former government, that they were meeting on a regular basis to monitor the situation. I think that's quite an appropriate role for them to play, so I cannot identify with the negative connotations the member opposite is trying to raise with respect to those meetings occurring. I think they were appropriate to take place and that the committee performed a function it was established to perform.

Mr Phillips: The reason I raise this is because the Premier has said that there was no involvement by the government, no advice to the OPP, and yet it shows during the two days before the shooting that the Conservative member was there regularly. He was referring to the Solicitor General; the inspector wanted to know what the Solicitor General thought.

We clearly believe that the government and the Premier played a key role in this affair. The only way we will find out is through a public inquiry. We now need a decision from the government. Will the government commit today to hold a public inquiry? We understand that there may be legal reasons why you need to wait until after the trial, but there is no reason why you cannot commit today to take the cloud over the government. Will you commit today to hold a public inquiry? I'll just be very clear on our request: Will you agree today to hold a public inquiry and start it at the earliest possible date that does not jeopardize the cases?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think it has been indicated on a number of occasions by the Attorney General, the Premier and myself that it would be imprudent for us to make a comment in respect to that particular request, given the fact that there are a number of civil actions under way, some criminal proceedings under way, an appeal, apparently, with respect to one criminal action that's been dealt with by the courts. Again, as we've indicated, when all these matters are behind us, I think the government will be prepared to make a decision.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It's interesting that the Solicitor General, the member for Leeds-Grenville, would

never have taken that kind of response if he were on this side of the House.

The Speaker: Who is the question to, please?

Mr Wildman: I have a question to the Attorney General on the same matter, in light of the comments of his colleague. The Attorney General will know that the verdict yesterday in Sarnia does not deal with the role of the government in the decisions that led to the police buildup that led to the shooting of Dudley George at Ipperwash. We know that the Premier's office was represented at the committee. We know that the committee initially talked about communication with the occupiers to try and negotiate an end to the occupation. We know that a quite unusual occurrence was the member for Lambton being at the police cordon and that he was in communication with the Premier's office.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Wildman: Doesn't the Attorney General believe now, in light of the judge's decision yesterday, that the government should at least commit to a public inquiry into the government's role in this affair?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I certainly will adopt the answer that was given by the Solicitor General moments ago. There are further charges pending, there is a civil action, there is a sentencing that is pending, there is a possible appeal, and it would be imprudent to have those discussions and make those decisions at this time.

Mr Wildman: The Premier himself has said, "There are two issues" to be discovered here. "One is how the OPP carries out their duties. And two is government policy." The charges that the Attorney General refers to deal partially, at least, with the first one. Will the Attorney General make a commitment now to have an inquiry into the second one?

What exactly happened on September 6, between the time the OPP was prepared to negotiate an end to the occupation and the decision to build up police forces that night that led to the fracas and the death of Dudley George? We need to know. The public needs to know. Will you commit to inquiring into government policy and the role of the government in this affair?

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly, if the member had gone on with the quote, it would have indicated that the Premier was quite satisfied with government policy, and it's quite clear that the government policy, in so far as this occupation was concerned, was to take steps to obtain a civil injunction. The record is very clear in terms of the material that was filed with the court, in terms of the efforts that were made to notify the court and the OPP and the occupiers, that the government's position was to obtain a civil injunction. The record is clear that that was in fact done.

1410

Mr Wildman: We know that at 1:45 on September 6, the OPP issued a release saying they were going to attempt to negotiate an end to the occupation. We know that the committee met that day and a decision was made to seek an injunction to end the occupation. We know that injunction was going to be heard at 11 am the next day. We also know that that evening there was a police buildup of forces that led to the fracas that led to the death of Dudley George.

What happened between the time the OPP decided to negotiate, between the time the committee decided to seek an injunction and that evening? Who decided they should circumvent the injunction and use force to end the occupation that led to the death of Dudley George? That's what we need to know. That's why we need a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Harnick: The member leaves out one very important factual aspect of this: the fact that that evening the court received documents so the judge could be prepared and have an opportunity to read them the day before the civil injunction was to be brought. Those documents were also sent by fax transmission to the Ontario Provincial Police by the government lawyer, asking that, if possible, those documents be delivered to the occupiers so they would know that the intention of the government was very clear; it was to seek a civil injunction the next day.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): To the Solicitor General with respect to the same matter: We know that Dudley George is the first aboriginal person to be killed by police in Canada in this century with respect to a land dispute claim. We know that. We know that he was shot dead by gunfire from an OPP firearm and that an officer has been found guilty.

Judge Fraser, a learned and competent trial judge, found as a fact, and these are his words, "The story of the rifle and the muzzle flash were concocted" after the fact —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I can't hear you. I'm having difficulty. Could the meetings take place outside the chamber, please.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. This is of the utmost importance to all Ontarians.

Judge Fraser found as a fact that: "The story of the rifle and the muzzle flash were concocted" after the fact "in an ill-fated attempt to disguise the fact that an unarmed man was shot." Dudley George was not armed, nor were any of the other occupiers. We do know that the OPP were given orders to "Get the" — expletive — "Indians out of the park."

Solicitor General, it's surely got to be in your interest as head of the OPP to have a full and public airing of the events that led up to the shooting of Dudley George. Once again, will you commit today to a public inquiry —

The Speaker: Thank you. Solicitor General?

Hon Mr Runciman: No one on this side of the House has ruled out an inquiry. I think it's been indicated by the members of the government who have spoken on this issue that we want the various matters that are before the courts to be resolved before a decision will be taken. Also, the member will appreciate the fact that there remains the possibility of an inquest, which will be the chief coroner's call with respect to that decision.

A number of matters have to be dealt with through the courts and possibly through a coroner's inquest. I understand the member's concerns and we respect them, but we also have to respect the various processes we have to go through with before we can make that decision.

Mr Kormos: Clearly, a coroner's inquest at this point is quite redundant. We know how Dudley George died. We know the cause of death. We know that it was OPP gunfire. There's no dispute about that from any quarter in the province.

You've heard reference to the Premier's comments: "[T]wo issues.... One is how the OPP carries out their duties. Two is government policy. Nothing I've seen or heard causes me concern with government policy." Solicitor General, the Premier is trying to make a scapegoat of the OPP and in particular Sergeant Deane. In fact, he's agreeing with the judge's verdict and confirming that there's something wrong with how the OPP carried out their duties.

I put the question to you whether or not you agree with the Premier and his analysis of the situation, that it's the OPP who are at fault and nothing that came from any government quarter.

Hon Mr Runciman: I am not going to comment on a court case which we now understand will be appealed. But I will say with respect to the possibility of a coroner's inquest that the member suggests it would be set on very narrow terms. I think we know from the history of coroners' inquests that the chief coroner has a great deal of latitude in terms of setting the terms of reference for an inquest and has looked at a variety of issues, including use of force, in other inquests. I think it's quite appropriate that if indeed there is an inquest following the resolution of the court proceedings, the chief coroner will have wide latitude to take a look at a variety of concerns that have been expressed by members of this Legislature and the public.

Mr Kormos: Judge Fraser's findings of fact, based on the evidence that was before him, are clearly that OPP officer Sergeant Deane's evidence was concocted, that it wasn't true. He rejected it entirely. He as much as said that it was perjury, it wasn't the case.

Clearly the OPP, since the shooting, developed a pattern of conduct that led to this fabrication of evidence. The only conclusion that Ontarians can reach is that there is a coverup that was participated in by the OPP, which led to the fabricated evidence and of which the fabricated evidence was part and parcel. The coverup, one has to infer, has to be of the government's role and their directions given to Ontario Provincial Police officers at Ipperwash Park.

You surely have to be as concerned about that as any other Ontarian and as interested in determining the truth and determining a process whereby these tragic consequences can be avoided in the future. If you're not going to call a public inquiry, what process are you going to embark on to ensure that this doesn't happen again?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think I've outlined, as have the Attorney General and the Premier on a number of occasions, the various processes that will be followed, and we've indicated and made a commitment to do that. With respect to the question of an inquiry, that decision will be taken when all the other matters are resolved, are behind us. There's also the continuing possibility that the chief coroner will see the need for an inquest. That remains a possibility. Those are the steps that will be followed and followed quite appropriately.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns land ambulances. Eight months from now, under your new division of responsibility, local government will assume 100% of the cost of land ambulances. My question today is specifically about a piece of geography in Ontario and how this ambulance policy is going to work. I want to talk about Algonquin Provincial Park, a piece of Ontario real estate owned by Her Majesty in right of the Ontario government, where annually one million people go to vacation.

How, effective January 1, 1998, is your ambulance policy going to work in Algonquin Park for those million people? How much are they going to pay and to whom are they going to pay whatever charge is required?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member knows that final decisions have not been taken with respect to the Who Does What exercise. With respect to the details, at the end of the day, a shift in where the tax dollars are coming from, whether they're coming out of the income tax or coming out of the property tax to replace the education tax that comes off, over \$5 billion worth, won't change one iota the service coverage of land ambulances in this province.

Mr Conway: Let's be very clear. I think I know why the Minister of Health is squirming. He understands what bad policy this is. While he seeks to integrate and streamline the health care system, he's got real fragmentation and real fracturing in land ambulances. So accepting what the government has already announced and decided, on January 1, 1998, local government will pay the full cost of land ambulance services.

1420

A million people annually visit Algonquin Park, which is owned by the provincial government and where there is no local government. My question remains, under the new policy to take effect in eight months' time, who is going to pay the ambulance service charges in Algonquin Provincial Park? How much, and to whom will those payments be made?

Hon Mr Wilson: The question is moot, given the fact that a number of our land ambulance services are owned and operated by municipalities or the private sector now. Only 10 of the 172 are actually run by the province.

The money, obviously, if final decisions are taken on Who Does What — there are tremendous areas right now —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member obviously doesn't want an answer. The fact of the matter is, municipalities collectively will have the responsibility if the Who Does What final decisions are taken. The discussion now is, will municipalities collectively have the responsibility? I expect they will take that responsibility collectively to make sure that the province is covered, and the laws will be designed to ensure that responsibility covers all of the province. They will take that responsibility as seriously as I do and as seriously as I hope the honourable member does as an elected member at a different level of government. I know the local level —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question, third party.

CHILD ABUSE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services and it's with respect to the Child and Family Services Act.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): You want to be worried about that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, member for Beaches-Woodbine. Members for Windsor-Sandwich and Sudbury, can you come to order, please? We're into a new question. Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Minister, none of us on any side of this Legislative Assembly or any member of the public can read the horrific accounts of child abuse and child murder without feeling a sense of absolute rage and a weighty sense of a collective failure, that we've failed these precious children. I know you and all of our colleagues in this Legislature would share that.

You have indicated a number of steps you're taking. The one I want to talk to you about is with respect to a review of the legislation. You're quoted as saying that the balance of deciding when or whether to take a child from the home has to be examined, especially in the wake of the number of infant deaths due to abuse.

In the early 1980s there was an extensive review that led to the current Child and Family Services Act. There were green papers, there was a white paper, draft legislation; there were public consultations and hearings. All parties were involved in drafting a very delicate balance in this legislation. I hope that all parties can be involved now in the review. I have sent you a letter asking if you would refer the Child and Family Services Act review to the standing committee on social development. Minister, will you join with us in seeking a joint solution?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I certainly agree that there needs to be considerable debate and consultation in any review of the Child and Family Services Act. That legislation was written after very careful review, and if there are to be any changes, I think we need to have another very, very careful review.

I appreciate the member's suggestion about the standing committee. That's certainly one option. She's mentioned green papers or white papers or other kinds of public consultation. I think those are all excellent suggestions and I will consider them very seriously.

Ms Lankin: Minister, at this point I'm not asking you to create another green paper or white paper. We have had that. We have a piece of legislation. I believe that legislation could be referred to a committee. This is a way of expediting an all-party examination of it, and let's bring forward the people in the system to tell us how the system is failing our children, not just the legislation, but how the system is failing. Let's work together to find appropriate solutions that we can add to the list of initiatives you've already taken. Every day, as you have said, is a day too long in terms of finding the right

protections to ensure that no more children die in these abusive situations.

Minister, I appreciate your reviewing that. Please get back to us quickly with an answer that says yes, you will send the legislation to the legislative committee. Let us work with you to find the appropriate solutions.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The first thing I want to be sure of is that any particular consultation process that we undertake is indeed going to be helpful. The task force that's occurring right now with the coroner's task force, which the children's aid society is part of and which the ministry is supporting, I think is a first step in that process. There are excellent recommendations that have been coming forward. I think they need to be seriously reviewed. The standing committee may well be another way to continue the review. I'm quite prepared to consider that seriously once we get those recommendations back.

I'm also quite prepared to invite the honourable member to participate in whatever review process we have, because I do take her at her word that she is interested in assisting and helping in a non-partisan way, as I'm sure all the members in the House would be.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. As you know, Minister, my riding is referred to as the Chemical Valley of Canada. We have many, many industries and companies discharging waste water into the river. However, it has come to my attention that the Ontario Hydro station near Sarnia is improving the quality of waste water discharged in the St Clair River. I would ask you, Minister, to comment on the improvement and its direct environmental effects on my area and around Sarnia.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I understand the importance of the Ontario Hydro works in the Lambton area. It's a high employer and a good environmental citizen.

Currently, Ontario Hydro is constructing an effluent treatment facility in the Lambton generating station to ensure that boiler waste water discharged to the St Clair River more than meets the highest standards of my ministry. Air and water emissions from the Lambton generating station have always met the MOEE regulatory standards, but standards for discharges are being made stricter than previous governments had. Therefore, in order to meet these new standards, Ontario Hydro is putting forward a new clarifier system in order to treat its waste water from the boilers. The new facility at Lambton ensures that water discharges from the station will more than satisfy the new tougher regulations we're putting forward.

Mr Boushy: Mr Minister, you spoke of the environmental effects of the new water clarifying system. I would like you to mention something on the economic impacts of such initiatives taking place near my riding of Sarnia.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm pleased to inform the honourable member that this is not only good for the environment, but it's good for the economy. On the one hand, Ontario Hydro is surpassing the environmental regula-

tions. On the other hand, the \$10-million project will create 40 new construction jobs through a local contractor. It is estimated that 60% of the estimated \$10-million cost will be spent locally on materials and labour. Currently, the Lambton generating station employs 330 regular staff, and I know the member is really pleased about that because he's always fighting for jobs in his area.

I would also like to point out that a number of significant environmental improvements have been made at the plant in the last few years. For example, in 1994, Ontario Hydro brought into operation a scrubber system that reduces sulphur dioxide emissions by 90%. The scrubber process produces a gypsum byproduct that is sold to a drywall manufacturer. This is another example of a win-win situation.

1430

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Attorney General. The Attorney General over the last few months has assured this House on repeated occasions that his plan for the family support plan office is working well and that he'll iron out the bugs. In spite of hundreds of cases that have been raised, in spite of repeated concerns, things don't seem to get any better.

In January of this year, one of my constituents approached your office about having their family withdrawn from the plan. After repeated requests, nothing happened. Finally, on January 27 we faxed the MPPs hotline. Instead of the normal seven-day wait, we had a 10-day wait. We had to refax and got specific instructions with respect to how to withdraw. Finally, on April 7 of this year, that family was withdrawn from the family support plan. How do you justify that and what do you say to that family in terms of the money that's still being tied up?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate the question from the member because we are attempting to provide greater access to the family support plan by clients who need the service than existed before. We are making some significant progress. The plan is not perfect. We still have a long way to go in that regard.

But the member raises a very important question, and the important question is the need for people to be in the plan when they can otherwise pay their money without having their support needs institutionalized. Certainly one of the goals we have is to ensure we can develop an opting out process so that those who don't wish to be in the plan, those who don't need the plan to institutionalize what they're doing, won't be forced to be within the plan. We were working to develop that process and I hope that will be ready very shortly.

Mr Duncan: Attorney General, as to the family I spoke of, it's a situation where the mother had custody of two children and she was diagnosed with cancer in December last year. By voluntary agreement she agreed to transfer responsibility and custody for the children back to the father of the children in January. The father

of the children is on unemployment insurance. The woman passed away three days before your office responded to the family, and that family, that lives only on unemployment insurance, continues to pay into the family support plan without getting any money back.

It is an absolutely irresponsible response you've given this House today and in the past. Your trivial answers are too late for my constituent and they're too late for the hundreds of other families that have been so devastated by your lack of action and lack of willingness to face reality. Will you come to terms with a problem that's facing thousands of people in this province and deal with it immediately so no more tragedies of this nature can happen?

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly, if the member would provide me with the details of that particular case, I will do everything I can to deal with it.

As I've indicated, we have put money into the plan. We have developed better technology to ensure we can transfer money more quickly. We're making every attempt to increase the number of callers who get through to the plan. We've gone from 6% to 50%. It's still not good enough. The family support plan is now disbursing 12% more money to women and children on a weekly basis than it did a year ago and we are endeavouring to provide that better service. If the member provides me with the details, if there is a problem, I will do my utmost to ensure it's resolved.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Question to the Solicitor General: Solicitor General, recently you were quoted in the news media as indicating you were considering consulting with respect to the police duty to cooperate and the SIU protocol. You don't have a very good track record when it comes to consultation. With respect to Bill 105, you totally disregarded community groups while you spent months consulting with the police stakeholders.

It's imperative that on a consultation with respect to police duty to cooperate, section 113, sub (9) of the Police Services Act, and a new SIU protocol, community groups get equal opportunity to provide input. All we're asking of you today, Solicitor General, is to commit yourself to a full, open and public consultation, not only with police stakeholders but also with various community groups, all of whom represent people of Ontario and have a strong interest in this consultation process.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): No final commitments have been made with respect to this issue. I did indicate on the weekend that we were considering it and taking a look at the whole question with respect to the protocol and the possibility of a consultation.

As the member knows, there has been an inability to reach a consensus in the past but I feel it's worth another try to see if we can indeed achieve a consensus. Certainly it would be my feeling that any consultation process would be open, would try to hear the input of anyone who had a view with respect to this issue, and that if we make a decision to establish a task force to review this

issue, we would have representation on that task force from community groups.

Mr Kormos: Solicitor General, it's imperative that the matter of police duty to cooperate be addressed. The failure of police chiefs to enforce section 113, sub (9) and the various interpretations of it has hindered several recent SIU investigations into serious killings of citizenry.

You've got 105 before the committee. You should know that practically every community member who appeared before the justice committee expressed concern that Bill 105 totally disregarded the issue of police duty to cooperate. You know as well that even the police aren't enchanted by the contents of Bill 105. In light of the fact that you should and are considering this consultation process, why don't you defer Bill 105 until such time as the issue of duty to cooperate with police can be dealt with in a fair and open public process?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think during the consultation process we respected concerns related to the continuation of the SIU under the Ministry of the Attorney General. It was originally established under the Ministry of the Solicitor General. We recognized that that perception, and more than perception, that reality of independence had to be retained. We've also recognized the concerns of not only community groups but a range of other people across this province with respect to the whole question of duty to cooperate. That's why I've indicated we're taking a look at the establishment of a task force to consult with the public and make recommendations, and hopefully achieve a consensus with respect to a protocol which will direct the operations of the SIU in its relationships with police and their responsibilities in the future.

1440

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is for the Solicitor General. Many people in my riding of Durham East are very supportive of our Solicitor General's approach to the young Offenders Act, and at the same time they're very critical of federal Justice Minister Allan Rock. Recently I understand that the federal government has proposed a new funding arrangement with respect to the Young Offenders Act and that these proposals reduce the federal spending and treat Ontario unfairly. Minister, give the public some support or your understanding of these cutbacks and particularly in their dealing with this serious public safety concern.

Interjections.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The reaction of the Liberal members opposite is typical with respect to their concerns or with the public's concerns related to the Young Offenders Act and young offenders in this province.

The reality is that the federal government's participation in funding for young offenders has fallen over the years from originally 50% of costs incurred by the province to about 30% now. Under the new proposal proposed by Mr Rock and the federal Liberal government, Ontario will see another \$3-million cut from the federal transfers to fund our young offenders programs in

this province. Ontario will be the only province in Canada cut back by the federal Liberal government with respect to young offenders.

In my capacity as Solicitor General, with the Attorney General — we pressured the federal government and the federal justice committee to make substantive changes to the Young Offenders Act to realize the concerns of people right across this country. They have ignored us. What have they done instead? They've cut back funding to Ontario.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Minister, for a very, very thorough response. It's once again the federal Liberal government downloading unfairly on to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I don't think the member should go there. It's unparliamentary, yes, and there are names they may come back with that you may not like. Member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: It's apparent I certainly touched a nerve. Our minister in his response was very, very clear that this is an issue where the federal Liberal government is lacking responsibility and once again giving Ontario the short end of the stick. The federal justice minister, Allan Rock, certainly owes you and the people of Ontario an explanation. Could you tell the members here today any other proposed funding changes that may negatively affect the people of Ontario.

Hon Mr Runciman: The federal government is not only cutting their funding for young offenders in Ontario, they also want to now set our priorities. As an example, Ontario is embarking on an innovative program called strict discipline for repeat young offenders. We have very significant recidivism rates in this province, over 60% of young offenders coming back into the system. We feel it's critically important that we try new measures, and strict discipline is one of those new initiatives, which the federal government is now saying they will not fund. It will be a low priority, when we're trying to do something innovative to try to reduce recidivism with young offenders.

What they're saying is, "We're going to give you less money; we're going to ignore your concerns and the concerns of Ontario citizens about the Young Offenders Act; and we're going to determine the priorities for your citizens." I want to tell the people of this province and the federal government that that is not acceptable. We simply will not accept it; we will fight it.

TRANSFER OF PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is for the Minister of Transportation and it concerns a statement he made yesterday about the scheme of offloading highways on to municipalities. I've spoken to the minister on many occasions. The minister stated that he was downloading, and this is his quote: "only highways that no longer serve a purpose as a provincial highway." He went on to say, "We have transferred highways that are in good condition, and for the ones we are transferring that need the work, we're supplying monetary funds."

Come on, Minister. A nice answer, but neither of those statements is a reality for many municipalities across

Ontario, particularly in SD&G. The road needs \$15 million of work and at least \$8.5 million to make it reasonable; instead you've provided \$5 million. Where do you think the municipality is suddenly going to get an extra \$3 million to pay for the construction?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the honourable member for clarifying what I said. That is exactly what I said, and I will stand behind what I said, because this government is transferring highways that are no longer provincial highways; they serve mainly the purpose of local roads. Highways that we are transferring, we are transferring in good condition, and the ones that are not, we are making funds available to them so those highways will be in good condition.

Mr Cleary: We are talking about 72 kilometres of old Highway 2 across my riding in east Grenville, a road that the counties didn't even want but they had to take. It's a minimum of \$8.5 million to repair it, and you're offering \$5 million. Even your cabinet colleague whose riding has a portion of this highway running through it admits that the road needs extra money.

On April 2 in a news article, you already personally reviewed this with the member for SD&G, so could you please confirm here today that you will indeed give additional dollars to the united counties — and I mean additional dollars, not infrastructure money, because of the tri-level funding badly needed to rebuild other areas of basic infrastructure. You didn't answer my first question.

Hon Mr Palladini: I'd just like to remind the honourable member that he answered his own question, but I did meet with the eastern wardens and certainly the conversations were very explicit and understanding. We understood each other. Also, as far as the funds that we have allocated on the highways that we are transferring, I think it's a fair process and we are treating municipalities fairly.

I just want to reiterate what I said yesterday, that we are taking \$5.4 billion out of the residential taxes because of education and I believe there's going to be money available for these municipalities to do the repairs if they are going to be needing repairs later on.

I also want to say this: We have put aside \$800 million that municipalities will be able to draw from in case the transfers and the funds are not available. Plus, on top of that, we have \$1 billion as an ongoing fund that municipalities can draw from.

1450

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, a report funded by your government and released today reveals the shocking statistic that over the last four years 62 women per year were killed by a spouse or boyfriend. The chilling statistic found in the research shows that the women who are most at risk are those estranged from a spouse and those who have a history of violence in the relationship.

With this evidence in front of you today, we wonder why your government would embark on a direction of

cutting and so-called rationalizing the shelter services that provide protection for these women. Will you reinstate the funding for shelters and second-stage housing, the services that those women need to stay alive? Will you reinstate the funding to at least the 1995 level?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you to the honourable member for the question. If she's referring to the study I'm familiar with, it releases statistics between 1991 and 1994 and statistics between 1974 and 1990, which do show some very alarming facts.

We take the issue very seriously and, unlike other governments, we are prepared to ask very difficult questions about how can we do a better job with the services and the programs we have. That's one of the reasons why we have asked the questions of the community, why my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues has gone out and done the consulting she has done, so we can improve the services we are offering to women. That is also one of the reasons that the government, under the Who Does What initiative, was prepared to assume the full cost of the funding for shelters, because we do believe it's a very important support network for those women who are abused.

Ms Churley: Is there one woman over there in that Tory caucus standing up for women in this province? I am surprised that not one of you is indicating that you are standing and speaking up for women, the most vulnerable in the province, at that cabinet table.

Minister, today on CBC Radio one of the authors of the research, Rosemary Gartner, stated that overwhelmingly the women who are at risk are women who are separated from their spouse. What they need is support for that period. Those are the very services your government is cutting. The evidence is in front of you now. Court proceedings do not save lives. Your ministry cut all operating support for second-stage shelters. Those are what save women's lives. Will you commit to doing something to turning around the situation? Will you reinstate, at the very least, the funding for second-stage housing?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I shall ignore the what I found rather offensive comments she made about the commitment of women —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: This government, as has been said earlier today, has undertaken many actions to support women who are the victims of violence. We are spending \$100 million on these programs. This is more spending than other provinces per capita are putting forward. I believe we have a track record which indicates that we do care and that we are putting forward programs that will work, programs that will actually help support women who are in abusive situations.

LAKE ERIE YELLOW PERCH

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Sunday morning my children and I were on the pier in Port Dover, along with

many weekend fishermen. People were catching sunfish, bowhead, the odd mud puppy, but the vast majority caught were Lake Erie yellow perch.

Minister, I understand you originally contacted officials in Ohio expressing concerns about that state overharvesting yellow perch in Lake Erie. I know in Ontario both recreational and commercial fishermen are concerned about this. Can you give us more details, please?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member for Norfolk for the question. The member is correct. I recently wrote Ohio officials to let them know that Ontario is very upset over the overfishing in Lake Erie.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know that to members of the opposition this may not be a big issue, but commercial fishing and recreational fishing are an important issue for the province of Ontario. This is the third year in a row that Ohio has exceeded its share of the total allowable catch of Lake Erie yellow perch and this situation cannot continue. I know the opposition doesn't care about this issue, but I can tell you there are a lot of people in Ontario who do.

Ontario has worked very hard in recent years to manage the yellow perch stocks so that they will recover from the serious decline that began in 1990. We have every right to expect similar results from Ohio, that it will be changed and corrected for the future.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. It was about mud puppies, I think.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): We have a unanimous consent on this. Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Riverdale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning the Environmental Commissioner's report. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent that the member for Northumberland be permitted to respond.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

PETITIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

I affix my signature to the petition.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, minister responsible for women's issues; Premier Mike Harris; and all members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative government.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, urge you to reject the recommendations of the Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario report.

"We are supportive of the work currently being done by community-based sexual assault and rape crisis centres and women's shelters. We strongly oppose any cutbacks in funding for these vital services.

"We find recommendations such as those to limit a woman's stay in a shelter to 24 to 48 hours and to eliminate community-based rape crisis and sexual assault centres to be outrageous and unacceptable."

This is signed by 4,755 women and men in south-western Ontario and I am proud to affix my signature.

TVONTARIO

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): This is a petition with respect to the preservation of a publicly owned TVOntario and the funding of this educational centre.

1500

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My petition that I have before me was organized by Marjorie Archambault. It concerns health care cutbacks and reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we wish this petition to be signed in favour of two hospitals kept open with one board for the city of Cornwall, Ont."

There are 914 signatures and I've also signed the petition.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I have a petition signed by over 1,000 people, and it states as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature with thousands of others.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGER

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Peterborough has the professionals to qualify as a health leader of the province;

"Whereas we especially have a large number of radiologists and the costs for patients needing MRIs to go to Toronto are escalating;

"Whereas delays in testing are detrimental to the health of patients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Peterborough, with a base hospital serving 300,000 people, should have the next MRI unit in Ontario."

I agree and affix my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government in the province of Ontario."

This is signed by hundreds of my constituents and was presented to me when I was visiting the schools of Manitoulin.

SCHOOL BOARD RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I wish to present a petition with respect to Bill 104 to the Legislature.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have one which I will read to the members of the assembly.

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas non-instructional staff of boards of education provide an important and essential service to schools in Ontario;

"Whereas the school system functions best, in the interest of its students, when all of its employees work in harmony and coordination and with the kind of expertise that comes with continuity, coordination and experience;

"Whereas Bill 104 encourages the privatization and outsourcing of non-instructional positions and the resulting loss of jobs, cutting of wages and salaries, and removal of employment benefits for people with comparatively moderate incomes;

"Whereas dedicated educational employees are having their lives severely disrupted so that the Harris government can finance an income tax cut that benefits the wealthiest people the most;

"We, the undersigned, request that Bill 104 be withdrawn and any future legislation not call for the outsourcing and privatization of educational jobs."

I affix my signature, as I'm in total agreement with this petition.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition that was presented to me today from Tim Calhoun of 71 Centrefield Drive in Courtice, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

It's my pleasure to present this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition in regard to the current child care crisis in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important, fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers,

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities, urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

I have affixed my signature to this document because I'm in total agreement with it.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I'd like to present a petition on behalf of some of the residents and constituents of the riding of Bruce. It is addressed to the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, minister responsible for women's issues, Premier Mike Harris and all members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative government.

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, urge you to reject the recommendations of the Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario report.

"We are supportive of the work currently being done by community-based sexual assault and rape crisis centres, women's shelters and women's advocacy centres. We strongly oppose any cutbacks in funding for these vital services.

"We find recommendations such as those to limit a woman's stay in a shelter to 24 to 48 hours and to eliminate community-based rape crisis and sexual assault centres to be outrageous and unacceptable. We are especially concerned that women-focused services will be eliminated."

I will affix my name to the petition.

CLOSURE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "To the Honourable Chris Hodgson, Minister of Northern Development and Mines:

"We, the people of northern Ontario, say no to the closure of the resident geologist office in Cobalt and the mining recorders offices in Kirkland Lake and Timmins."

I affix my name to this petition.

CORONER'S INQUEST RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there was a serious accident on Highway 401 near Waterloo regional road 20 on June 16, 1994; and

"Whereas one life probably would have been saved had there been an emergency entrance to 401 for the air volunteer fire department;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement the recommendations of the coroner's inquest."

I'll sign this, and it's been signed by 165 of my constituents.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here which is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and to the Honourable Michael Harris, Premier of Ontario. It's signed by Karima Lutzak of Downing Street, Terry Robinson of Aragon Road, C.A. Peters of Rideau Street in Kingston, among others of these 200 or so people. It reads as follows:

"The citizens of Ontario and your Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation agree that this province has one of the great library systems in the world. This system has been built by citizens like me in every Ontario community serving on local library boards, with the decision-making power to promote, protect and create libraries that respond to our own communities;

"I request that you guarantee in your new legislation citizen-majority library boards and free access to all library information resources, the foundation of lifelong education."

I've affixed my signature to the petition and I am in total agreement with it.

1510

PUBLIC BEACHES

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I have a petition from George Lawrence, signed by hundreds of property owners in Tiny township concerning the continued preservation of public beaches through the Land Titles Act.

"We, the undersigned, register our objections to a private developer's application for title of Georgian Bay beachfront property, which has been used widely by the public for hundreds of years. Restricted use of this beach would be an infringement on the long-standing and implied rights of the public to have access to this beach."

I've signed my name to that.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris has changed the designation of estate wineries in Niagara from agricultural land to industrial land; and

"Whereas the primary use of winery property is not industrial but farm and commercial; and

"Whereas most of the properties involved are zoned agricultural and therefore have no access to normal services provided to industrial properties; and

"Whereas the grape and wine industry produces millions of dollars in economic activity and employs thousands of people throughout Ontario; and

"Whereas this added tax burden presents undue hardships to estate wineries and may result in job losses and a halt to the development in this important sector; and

"Whereas this change may have broader implications for all value added farming in the Niagara region and in southwestern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, support the wineries of the Niagara region and southwestern Ontario and call upon Mike Harris and the Conservative government of Ontario to show their support for farm-based wineries on agricultural lands and the economic benefit it provides all of Ontario by removing the industrial assessment factor that the Mike Harris government has now burdened this industry with and reinstate an assessment which more fairly reflects the nature of value added farming."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with the contents of this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for interim supply for the period commencing May 1, 1997, and ending October 31, 1997.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You may recall, Madam Speaker, that yesterday we sought and obtained unanimous consent to share our time with the member for London Centre and we'll do that. I note that we have approximately an hour and 10 minutes out of the one-and-a-half-hour allocation to our party, and I can assure you that we intend to use every second of that time.

We find it to say the least shocking, appalling, that the government would choose to wait until the very last hour to get the House to say, "Yes, you shall pay the bills of the province." But they need the money, and make no mistake, they need it quickly, because this is a government that is spending more money this fiscal year than the last one. This is a government that has underestimated the budget by more than \$500 million, in fact by some \$660 million, yet at the same time those ministries who don't speak as loud as some, those cabinet ministers who don't have much clout at cabinet, are being asked to carry the agenda of the government.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Name names.

Mr Pouliot: The Ministry of the Attorney General: actual spending, 1995-96, \$1.085 billion. That ministry has been gutted almost by half. The current outlook for 1996-97, they're going from \$1.1 billion to \$654 million.

Mr Bradley: I thought they cared about crime.

Mr Pouliot: I guess the Tories are soft on crime. They talk a tough line, but when it comes time to protect society, the budget speaks for itself. The ministry is being gutted.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy, clean water, the air that we breathe, goes from — I can't believe this — \$239 million in 1995-96 to \$172 million. This is a government that wishes to — well, they haven't said no to exporting another one of our resources: water. I guess they'll sell it to the highest bidder. They'll just call it "Perrio" and put the government stamp on it and out it goes. They might do this; they're gutting the ministry.

The Ministry of Education and Training: \$8.39 billion goes to \$7.608 billion, and they have the audacity, the gall to say that money hasn't been taken out of the classroom. You're an educated person, Madam Speaker. You have been in this House for some time. Surely by now you know who's telling the truth. Is it the government, which says, "We haven't cut anything out of the classroom," or is it over \$1 billion missing? Where has the money gone?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It went to the northern heritage fund.

Mr Pouliot: It certainly did not.

Before time closed in on us yesterday, I was in the process of citing some campaign material that I have with me, and I want to share it with you, Madam Speaker. It's from Mr Al Leach, who is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He's the minister responsible for downloading, for passing the buck on the services to municipalities, for shortchanging the representatives, the reeves, the mayors, the councils, the citizens at the most relevant level of politics. From morning till night Mr Leach and his cohorts will make the municipalities pay big time.

This is what Mr Leach said on June 2, 1995. Recall that the election was held six days after, June 8, 1995, so this is the week before. It was addressed to homeowners in Cabbagetown, Moore Park and Rosedale. "Unlike Tim Murphy" — and he was pointing at the Liberal candidate — "I own a home and live in the riding of St George-St David. My party and I will never" — underline "never" — "support the imposition of MVA in Metro Toronto." That's market value assessment.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Who said that?

Mr Pouliot: This was said by Mr Leach.

Ms Martel: No. Must have been just before an election.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, yes. Then he goes: "The Liberals milked Metro dry. When the Liberals were in power, they treated all taxpayers, but particularly Metro's, like cash cows. They increased taxes 33 times in five years." This is what Leach says about the Liberals.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. Order, member for Lake Nipigon. I'd like to remind the member to refer to the members of the House by their ridings.

Mr Pouliot: I thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to refer to the members by riding. You will kindly accept my apologies, because I was reading and it doesn't say the riding, it says "Al Leach." I'm reading what the letter says. I'm not about to change the written word here. I wouldn't do that. My word is my bond; I would not do that.

"When Lyn McLeod was in cabinet, the Liberals implemented the commercial concentration tax, a \$1-per-square-foot tax on commercial property in the greater Toronto area. By the time this tax was finally repealed in 1994, Metro had lost 200,000 jobs."

This is tainted, really. There are many factors. There's the recession etc, but to tie it directly and completely would be, how would you say, hypocritical or dishonest? Would it not be dishonest and hypocritical when you know better?

1520

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, to quote the Speaker earlier, "I wouldn't go down that road" if I were you. You're getting very close to unparliamentary language here and I advise you to withdraw those comments.

Mr Pouliot: Thank you, Madam. Of course I will. I have made it a habit in the past 12 years to adhere to the protocol, to the good manners in this chamber and I will certainly try not to depart, even when faced with provocation, nothing short of that.

But there is one thing I dislike, Madam: It is someone who will do anything to get elected, to get the vote. With the new soliciting laws in Ottawa, I would be careful if I had my name on this. I would risk being arrested.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You're talking about the Agenda for People.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Ms Martel: What did Isabel Bassett say?

Mr Pouliot: Well, it says, "A Mike Harris government will review all alternatives to market value assessment, including unit value assessment, to determine whether an alternative method would offer a more equitable and efficient means of assessing. The policy of the Progressive Conservative party," the people there, "has always been that we will never impose market assessment on Toronto. We remain firm in that position."

Ms Martel: What did she call Bill 106?

Mr Pouliot: We have Bill 106 — I wish to thank my colleague from Sudbury East — An Act respecting the financing of local government. They said they would never impose market value assessment. Now they call it actual value assessment. Two weeks from now they will call it current value assessment. Everything I buy is market value. It's what the market will bear, the law of supply and demand. The consumers, the producers, the merchants — that's our daily lives. This is our system, with its competition, the marketplace, the essence of the system.

If you ask someone, "Market value assessment": Does it mean the value of the market?" people will say yes.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It's the current value.

Mr Pouliot: It's the current value; there is no difference. In fact, if we were to send "current value," "actual value" and "market value" assessment to a lab, under the closest of DNA and forensic studies no one could decipher the difference.

But here's the trick. You said, "We shall never do this," so you change one or two small things. Not the intent and spirit; it's the same. Now you can call it — this is the new product, but it's the same stuff. The

difference between truth and untruth is not a nuance. Those people knew, the minister knew; they were just waiting for that ballot box to go upside down — look at the dividends, look at those votes — and then they were to come and, bang. That's what they're doing now.

Some 3.8 million units are in the process of being assessed and reassessed. It's never been done in North America. This is the largest assessment exercise ever undertaken in North America. They need a small army to do it. The government is spending \$62 million to do that, to assess, and they're training people. Many of them are one-day trainees, like instant coffee: "Here's your little book, here's your certificate. Down the street you go. You are now an assessor."

Then this invasion of well-intended people at 12 bucks an hour — because it's gone to the private sector. The vulture, I mean the company, takes \$18; the assessor, a high school student, pockets \$12 per unit.

Knock, knock, knock. Ding dong. Your house: "Get the heck out of here. I don't want to see you."

"I'm an assessor. I'm a provincial assessor."

You must let them in. Many people will mistake them for bad news, so some of them will go to the local establishment and assess from the phone book. Get a phone book with them and the assessment will do.

Experts in the field — independent sources — are saying: "Three point eight million? You will have upwards of 900,000 appeals" — chaos, a real zoo — "and you will also have some discrepancies." You will have a horror show.

I want to walk you through a process which is about to take place, because Bill 106 doesn't work in isolation. It is a web, it is a mesh, it is a connection directly related to the advance of the Common Sense Revolution. Many things will happen starting January 1 when over 800 municipalities will be asked to partake in a tradeoff. But make no mistake: This is not revenue-neutral. The taxpayers at the municipal level, as you well know, are comprised of three different sectors. You have people who own a home or rent an apartment and through their rent — people who are homeowners pay directly. You have the commercial, mostly made up of small business, and then you have small and large industrial. At the present time all of those, all three sectors, pay an education tax.

At the residential level starting next January the education tax will be removed — it will remain at the industrial level; it will also remain at the commercial level — and in lieu of paying residential taxes, let me offer you the menu; not all of it, the list is too painful.

Land ambulance: Drive carefully. If you live in Manitouwadge and you have to go to Thunder Bay — a small municipality. We don't have the amenities, the services, of larger centres and we understand that. Nevertheless, it's 400 kilometres one way. The municipality will now have to pay.

Policing, protection, service, those women and men in blue: Municipalities will have to pay. Library, sewer and water: Very expensive. Social assistance: If you know someone who's less fortunate and they happen to need prescribed drugs, the municipality will now be asked to pay 50% of that. People will have to become familiar

with the formulary, an additional cost, and I can assure you the contingency fund will not take all of that. This is not revenue-neutral.

Seniors homes, long-term care: Some believe that demographics are two thirds of everything. While the cost of education is fairly easily determined, that of seniors is not. We have this bulge, we have people graduating en masse. In fact, each and every month in Ontario you have upwards of 7,000 people who go from being 64 to 65; 95% of those people, those Ontarians, latch on, go on to the drug plan. So those programs are open-ended. As you get older, you're more likely to see the doctor more often. You're more likely to — well, we all find ourselves on a waiting list, simply put. But now that cost will be passed along to the municipalities.

1530

They will have to find the resources at the municipal, residential, commercial and industrial levels for the cost of assessment, some costs related to transportation, maintenance and building of highways. If this is not downloading, I don't know what is and yet they said, "Stopping the downloading of mandates on municipalities."

The spin doctors, some of the whiz kids you see in the corridors here, some of the merchants of fear, the merchants of gloom and doom, who have to go outside and put the policies of the government to the public, paint a different picture. It was the Premier of the province not too long ago who, when referring to downloading, said that residential taxpayers should expect a 10% decrease on their houses by the year 2000. He's the person who said that if you're at the commercial level, expect a decrease as well, and if you're at the industrial level, your taxes will go down.

They're telling the municipalities, "You can do it by being efficient, by cutting surplus services, by being leaner," and yet this government is spending \$662 million more than the previous year. They can't do it themselves, but you tighten up your belt. They're blaming Ottawa. They're saying, "The feds, the Liberals in Ottawa, are cutting our transfer payments by close to \$3 billion, so now what we'll do is we will cut transfer payments and dump all kinds of services on the shoulders of municipalities."

They will repeal what they refer to as the BOT, the business occupancy tax. People are saying that this is perhaps not a bad idea. You know who will benefit? The bank towers are first in line. They will be the winners, the benefactors. The large apartment owners will come second. The large hotels come third. The commercial and the residential sectors will have to pick up the slack.

By way of example, I'll share a true story with you. Oakville is a rich community, no denying it. It has done very well. It's blessed with assembly lines second to none. The business occupancy tax will give the two largest employers an \$18-million break per year. That's \$18 million. Who is going to pick up the slack? The council will be forced to come up with new classes of taxes to recoup the money or they will pass it along to the consumer, to the commercial and residential sectors.

Some of the farming community get a farm rebate. In some cases it's 60%, 65%, 75% of their revenue. The

minister says: "Don't worry, be happy. Trust us. You can cut down on services." They have one clerk, administrator, treasurer, whatever, and they have two grader operators. What they gain on the farm, they'll lose on the house.

The whole province is impacted here. Southeastern Ontario, many farms, southwestern Ontario: They feed the province, they feed us. Toronto milks it and I don't have to tell you what they do up north; what they do in the north I'll leave to you. But this is a recipe for disaster. It need not happen.

They're saying to people: "There will be a phase-in period. You'll have up to eight years." In the real world nothing could be further from the truth. On January 1, 1998, the municipal world is about to change. The new councils elected two months prior, next November, will be at a meeting and they will address the first item on the agenda, which is the interim tax levy. They will look at the roll and they will fully impose what the law says they can: 50% of the previous year's taxes.

The assessment will come in April; the new services will start in January. The provincial fiscal year starts in April; theirs starts in January, and they will have all those services, all the dislocation, to deal with. Where are they to get the money? Where will the money come from? It will come in the form of one, final, massive levy. We know some communities where the rate of taxes will double; some others will go up by 40%. There hasn't been one reeve, one mayor, one council member, one council person who has said, "My taxes will go down or remain the same."

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Halton North, I think, Halton region.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, there's been one? Halton North. God bless you, there is one out of 800 municipalities. Thank you very kindly.

The taxes are going to go up. The government doesn't even know how much it will cost. They don't have a clue as to the final bill. But they want those services out the door, dumped on the municipalities and then they will keep writing the standards, the programs. "Do as we wish, do as you're told," but the cheque is not in the mail.

We're not opposed to change. We have noticed and lived with changes, most of them welcome, through the ages. We're not opposed; in fact, we encourage changes. But let's not overestimate the ability of a society to digest, to assimilate. It's coming so fast, all at once.

I don't have the assurance that this government knows what it's doing. It's on the hook to deliver \$5.4 billion in tax cuts to those who need it the least. We went through this scenario yesterday. Suffice it to say that if you take anyone of the middle class and look at their pay stub, their net pay, they will be hard-pressed to find any difference. But if you're rich, if you have that position of influence in life because you have many dollars, then you benefit. If you were to mention that maybe a sales tax cut would have been more effective, that maybe when you go to the marketplace rather than pay 8% you should pay 5%, that there's 3% back in your pocket out of every dollar you spend, that would make a lot more sense. The rich would not benefit as much. That's the difference here.

Roy Romanow in Saskatchewan thought it was fair. He reduced the sales tax by 200 basis points, 2%, and people are saying: "Thank you, Premier. Good times, good luck to you. You've done well," and the marketplace gets treated fairly, or certainly equally.

1540

Madam Speaker, it was one of those sessions where you had to be there to really appreciate the attitude of some of the government members. Right here in room 151, one of our committee rooms, one citizen made a presentation. She was representing herself, a most respectable person of venerable age. She talked about the impact of reassessment, with no cushion, happening all at once: Madame Katherine Packer.

When she mentioned that it would negatively impact her ability to pay — she's not rich, Madame Packer — one member of the government said, "If you can't afford it, sell it." Directly. I was devastated. Only the rules of the assembly prevented me from — well, if not assaulting, from saying a thing that I would live to regret. But that wasn't it. Another member of the Conservatives said, "Get a reverse mortgage," to Madame Packer, right there: "Get a reverse mortgage," because her taxes were to more than double. What an attitude. "You just finished your mortgage. Get back into a mortgage. Get into debt."

What they didn't say was that a reverse mortgage costs anywhere between 1.5% and 2% more than a conventional mortgage. Of course they didn't say this. But the arrogance, imagine. A direct confrontation with one of our senior citizens, a proud homeowner, widow: "Get a reverse mortgage. If you can't afford to live there, sell it." I'm still reeling over those comments, but some of my colleagues are saying not to be too surprised, that from time to time it will bring out the worst in them and it will serve; it's never too far from service.

There isn't one organization — Mr Pagnuelo, certainly not a New Democrat, of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said: "Put the brakes on. This is not workable." The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents 95% of municipalities in the province, do you know what they're saying? That municipalities cannot accept what you're trying to sell. In fact, Terry Mundell, the president of that great organization, is presently undergoing a massage of unprecedented penetration. They'll stop at nothing. They're into, I'm sure, whatever it takes: imported, scented, heated oil, whatever it takes to get to Mr Mundell. So far, soldier Mundell has stood up and said, "No, I cannot buy what you're trying to download on the municipalities." He's still standing proud, but for how long? They either want him to sell out or they want him to buy in. Either way, that'll do.

What we're saying is that we welcome changes, but give it a break. You're scaring people. You're antagonizing people en masse. If there are five organizations that you haven't antagonized, you'll go home tonight, Mike, and you'll look at the phone book and make sure that you sock it to them the next day. Stability is what people wish. People want the ability to stand on their own two feet. They want to be like the others. They're more than willing to pay their share, but their share must not be to the benefit of those who are not; namely, the people who have a lot. I want to wish them well. I don't begrudge

anybody who has some money, because many of us don't have much. There is an almost endless list of applicants, of people who are saying to the government, "Slow down."

I will share the remaining time with my distinguished colleague.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this motion, because I think it is very important for us to be very clear why our party believes it is essential that we talk about the government's methods when we're talking about this supply bill. We understand, as does everyone else in this room, the importance to the government of passing the supply motion prior to April 30. We understand that when we vote supply, we give the government the permission to spend dollars according to its budget and that in fact that right has with it some responsibility on the part of the government to be very transparent with the population as to how those dollars are flowing and what the implication of its budget decisions may be.

It is extremely important with this government that we take every possible opportunity to try and make more transparent to the public what is happening, because I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that this government is making every effort to make it difficult for even the most diligent of citizens to follow the flow of money within this government.

We have a saying that you can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. I think that is exactly what this government is going to find out. The way in which it is rapidly changing things around, moving money from one pot to another, moving the tax base from one pot to another, adding obligations to the regressive property tax in one area and to income tax in another area, eventually they are going to be exposed and they are going to be exposed as carrying on a shell game which is very dangerous for the people of Ontario. That's why, although the whip of the government and the House leader of the government are annoyed —

The Acting Speaker: Could I ask the members on the government side, if you need to meet, to meet outside to try to keep the noise level down a bit. Thank you. Member for London Centre, go ahead.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure why there's so much hilarity around the efforts of this government to try and hide from the general public the spending habits that it has developed. That is exactly why we need to talk about what is happening in connection with interim supply, because once the money is paid out, it's very hard sometimes to get people to pay attention.

The whip of the government party and the House leader of the government party have been expressing extreme irritation that we're still talking about interim supply today. They want to go on to their agenda of rapid change. They want to go on downloading responsibilities on to the regressive tax base. They want to go on with their very draconian measures. Because they don't really believe in the democratic process, they are doing everything they can to try and make sure the opposition parties do not have an opportunity to expose the way in which

they are trying to hide what is really happening with their spending. It isn't going to work, because it's our obligation to our constituents, it's our obligation as elected legislators, to expose that very problem that we all face.

We see a government that has engaged in very rapid change and is trying very hard to convince the people of Ontario that in the long run it's going to cost them less. My colleague from Lake Nipigon talked about the efforts of this government to try and hide the cost of the changes that are happening through the proposed municipal download, and he pointed out quite clearly that the plans of the government are opposed by virtually everyone who understands that that kind of shifting around of resources is eventually going to have very negative impacts on our ability to provide services within this province.

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But that doesn't really trouble this government, because this government has an ideological position around the provision of services. This government ideologically believes that what is offered as a public service is not appropriate, that what we do through our taxes ought to be minimal and that those who are fortunate enough to have enough dollars to pay for services should pay for those services and those who do not are not worth thinking about in the first place. That's being a little crude, but the reality is that's what it comes down to.

The examples my colleague pointed out, the kinds of comments to an elderly, fixed-income taxpayer that she should sell her house if she couldn't afford her taxes or that she should get a reverse mortgage, are exactly typical of the cavalier attitude the members of this government have to people who are not as fortunate as they are.

It is very simple, when you see the kind of right-wing attitudes this government has, to understand the policies they are bringing forward. Do they care if those who live in a community that is not theirs are going to lose services as a result of decisions they make here? Not likely. Do they even care if those services are going to get lost in their own communities? In many cases they won't, because they believe those services should not have been offered through government in the first place.

All their ideological rhetoric tells us they have a very low opinion of publicly offered services and those who deliver those services. Again and again, their suggestion is that those services ought not to be paid for out of the public purse, that people who can afford them can purchase them themselves and the rest will just have to suffer, because who are the rest? The rest, according to their social Darwinism, are people who don't deserve to have those services because they either haven't worked hard enough or they're not smart enough or they haven't really joined the game.

The reality is that this is a reversal of public policy in this province from its beginning. This province, from its beginning, has had a public policy that has concentrated on ensuring that we are looking after those who are most vulnerable even while we are improving the lot of everyone, and this is a government that doesn't believe that. So when we talk about how they spend money, when we are talking about a motion that gives them permission to spend money, it is appropriate for us to be

questioning the very ground rules they use when they are spending that money and it's appropriate for us to be identifying the fact that this government, through each of its ministers, has done everything it can to try and hide from the public the changes occurring in public spending. Many of their claims, meant to reassure the public about whether their services are going to be available to everyone, whether their services are going to be affordable for everyone, are in fact statements that try to confuse that public and try to hide what is actually happening.

Because I'm health critic, one of the areas I'm most familiar with is the whole area of health spending. In the Common Sense Revolution, the Conservative Party promised that they would not take one cent out of health care. We found out, barely weeks into their new government, that what they meant — I recall for people that both the finance minister and the Premier stated this in this place — was that by the end of the five-year period, spending in health care would be the same as it was the day the government took power.

Of course people attacked them from all over, because they said, "That's not what we understood you to mean," so then it became that they would each year put the same amount of dollars in. In fact there was great fanfare, great hooha, that they would in fact increase those dollars. Then, when they began to cut services, we heard them say: "Well, you've got to read the Common Sense Revolution a little bit more closely. We only promised to maintain those services that are covered by the Canada Health Act, so it's fine for us to charge the elderly and the disabled and those who are forced to live on social assistance a fee for their drugs, because drugs don't come under the Canada Health Act. Therefore, we haven't broken any promises."

Then we start to hear about the millions and millions of dollars that are going to come out of hospital funding. We see up to this point at least \$800 million come out of hospital funding, and we see this government put extraordinary powers in its Minister of Health's hands to close hospitals, to create a commission that supposedly is at arm's length, until members like the member for Lambton complain about what it means to have his hospital closed. We see exactly what this means, because under Bill 26, the hospital restructuring commission can order the closure of hospitals, can order the transfer of assets to other hospitals, can use absolutely draconian methods to change the structure of hospital care in this province.

When the Premier is reminded of what he said in Fergus during the election, that he had no plan to close hospitals, what are people to think? What are people to think? The Premier has no plan to close hospitals, but the health minister is responsible to him and the government is responsible to him, the government that passed Bill 26 and gave the power to the hospital restructuring commission to close hospitals, and the Premier says he has no plan? You must think that the people of Ontario are very foolish to believe that, and you will find that they do not. The responsibility is the government's responsibility, however they try to pass it off to others.

The Minister of Health stands in his place every day and says, "We are reinvesting everything we've taken out

of hospitals into health care." Well, I have the list of what he says he's putting back into health care; we have all the press releases. We've looked at all of this, and the reality is that very little of this is new investment into health care. The vast majority of what has been announced was already announced in the 1996 and 1997 budgets. They were there in those budgets as they roll out over the years. In fact, the Minister of Health was touting himself, saying he had reinvested \$862,000,112 into health care and that it was almost a wash with what had come out of hospitals.

The first problem is that the minister forgets he's confusing operating funds with capital funds. The reality is that the \$17.7 billion in hospitals is operating funds. Capital is separate. Those are operating funds. The minister so far has announced \$239.35 million in capital spending. He has announced the capital spending for the Thunder Bay restructuring, for example, at \$59.4 million; the Windsor restructuring at \$48.2 million; the Windsor cancer care centre at \$18.9 million. He has talked about the expenditures he is making in terms of MRIs. That's capital expenditure on equipment, very clear, big investments. He has talked about \$15.05 million in long-term care capital dollars in the rest of the province and \$29.1 million in Metro. He has talked about hospital capital of 67.7% for Guelph.

He's made these announcements and people think: "Well, \$800 million has come out of hospitals and now he's put back \$239.35 million. Surely that means he's reinvesting." He is reinvesting, but it has nothing to do with that \$17.7 billion, because that \$17.7 billion was the operating cost of these hospitals.

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When we look at what is already in the current budget, \$340.4 million of the so-called \$862 million that the minister has "reinvested" is already in the budget. Much of it was in the budget last year and has been announced at least twice and in some cases three and four times. This government insists on getting a public relations hit again and again for the same dollars, and we can show that again and again.

The whole issue of dribbling out the hospital growth dollars, mostly to the 905 area, certainly mostly in areas that are particularly of interest to Conservative members, was already announced in the 1996 budget, but we saw almost a year pass before any of that money was allocated.

If we look at the dollars in terms of some of the programs in cardiac surgery, for example, those dollars were already announced. Those dollars were announced and not spent previously. They are only just being allocated. This is typical of this government. This government said "great" and "wonderful" and congratulated itself again and again about child care. "We are putting 40 million extra dollars into child care." What did the Minister of Community and Social Services finally admit in February? "No, we haven't spent any of those dollars. No, we haven't allocated any of those dollars. It wasn't possible."

Mr Bradley: But have they announced them?

Mrs Boyd: They've announced them again and again, to the member for St Catharines. They have gone to their

ridings and they have tried to reassure people that they are not destroying the child care situation because there are these \$40 million hanging around there somewhere, never allocated.

My friend from Lake Nipigon talked a great deal about the download on to municipalities, about this so-called even trade between the cost of education and the cost of other services.

Mr Pouliot: It's a ripoff.

Mrs Boyd: It is, as the member suggests, a ripoff, because the reality is that we see exactly the same kind of hidden methodology there. There is a gap of at least \$1 million between what is being uploaded in terms of education and what is being downloaded in terms of services to municipalities.

What does the government say? "Don't worry, we've allocated all this money to emergency funds: We've got one for social assistance, we've got one for extraordinary circumstances." Ah, it's hard to take into account all the special circumstances. What they forget to tell people is: "But we have absolutely no guidelines under which this money would be released. We cannot guarantee one municipality in this province that they actually would be able to access that." In fact, I'd like to make it very clear that some members of the back bench in my area have been very frank with the city of London that it will never qualify for any of that money. They said it directly to the council in a public meeting with all members present.

That is exactly what we fear and what we believe will be true, that the circumstances under which municipalities can access this money will be so extraordinary that at the end of the year it won't be spent. It will cushion the fact that this government is not as fiscally responsible as it likes to pretend, that it does have a very serious revenue problem — not a spending problem, a revenue problem — because it is determined to give a tax cut at a time when that will only add to our public debt.

When the people of Ontario really understand that all the pain of cut services, all the pain they are experiencing in terms of job loss, in terms of effects to their community, all that is not going to result in any improvement to the debt of this province but is only going to add yet another \$5 billion a year — more than \$5 billion, we predict, but at least \$5 billion — over the whole term of their office to the debt — you cannot fool all the people all the time. They're going to find out and they're going to punish a government that has tried to trick them.

That is exactly what this government is doing. It is not a mistake that they are embarking on so many different projects all at once. It's part of the shell game. "If we confuse people enough, if we confuse them with so many changes that they don't know where the dollars are going and they don't know where the lack of services is actually going to lead them, they won't bring it home to us. They won't make us accountable."

I would say to this government that they are underestimating the voters of this province. The voters of this province are not nearly as naïve as you assume. They are beginning to ask very tough questions about where the money is going.

Where is the money going when so much has come out of education? They don't believe that the people they

judged and elected to school boards are being as foolish as this government would like them to believe. They know those people. Those people are members of their community. They have elected those people. Every time the Minister of Education or the Premier talk about how profligate those boards are and call down all sorts of scorn upon the decisions of those boards, they are insulting the voters who elected those public officials, and sooner or later people are going to figure that out.

Sooner or later people are going to figure out that many of the so-called wonderful moves to lower spending by this government are false economies. I suggest to you that the cuts in health care, the cuts in social services, the cuts in education, which are of course the most popular cuts with this Tory government because they deal with those who are least fortunate and deal with services that are delivered with some level of universality, whether or not people can afford to pay, will come back to haunt this government.

They are fond of saying that they have to make these cuts because otherwise their children will have to pay the price. We say that your children, my children, all of our children and grandchildren are going to pay the price of the false economies this government is doing. With the cuts in education, particularly the cuts to such things as junior kindergarten, to such things as programs that help those for whom English is a second language, programs that provide supports to those who have special needs within the schools, help them to integrate and become part of our community, those services that help those who are most disadvantaged because they come from backgrounds where education has not been part of a way of life, where they do not have mentors and supporters who are encouraging them to go on in education, those are the people who are going to suffer.

The suffering of those people will not be confined within a year or two; it will go on for their lifetimes. We know the predictors of what happens to people who do not get that help at the level of their community in their early years. They become unable to be independent. They become unable to be contributing in the way they could have, had they had those supports. They become a drag on all our other systems.

I get very tired of hearing members of this government, as the Solicitor General did today, ranting on about the problems of youth crime, ranting on about how we should be tough on youthful criminals, ranting on about how the more we punish these people, the better off we will be in our society, when absolutely every study shows exactly the opposite. Every study shows that at the root of youth crime is poverty, ill health, lack of supports, alienation from feeling at all that that youthful person is connected to society. All the research shows that.

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At the same time that the Minister of Education is withdrawing exactly the kinds of supportive services that help young people to feel supported, to feel connected, to feel part of their community, to learn different ways of behaving, the Solicitor General is blaming them for their own misfortune and this government is agreeing to policies that will lay up for us in the future a huge problem.

We believe very strongly on this side of the House that you spend your money on the services that will help people to be self-sufficient, law-abiding members of their community. We believe that those supports we have supported in this province consistently from one government to the next over more than 100 years are exactly the policies that give us healthy and strong communities. We do not believe that punitive policies, punishing those who are poor for being poor, punishing those who are alienated for being alienated, are the way that you ultimately save costs. You end up spending those costs in the criminal justice system; you end up spending those costs in lost productivity; you end up spending those costs anyway. We are saying very clearly that this government, through its spending policies, is laying up a huge social deficit for us in the future, a social deficit that will, I maintain, cost us more dollars in the long run, and more unproductive dollars in the long run.

The shell game that we talk about frequently on this side of the House is very real. The shell game of the download is very real. The propensity of the government to try to convince the people of this province that their view of things is right and everyone else is wrong reminds me of the old story of the people watching the soldiers go by and the mothers saying proudly: "Look at my Johnny. Everyone else is out of step." Well, Johnny Snobelen is out of step and most of the people in this province know it. The reality is that when the criticisms are coming to this government the way they are from every aspect, not just from people who are politically opposed to much of what you do, but even from people who are very committed to your political principles, doesn't it give you pause to think that you're making a mistake?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): No.

Mrs Boyd: You know better than everybody, do you? The member for Oxford is saying no. He has no question in his own mind, despite criticism from the board of trade, from the chambers of commerce, from Hazel McCallion, from the Ontario Hospital Association, from all of the power structures on which you depend very heavily for your support, as well as all of those who are being disadvantaged by your spending policies, that you're right and they're wrong. Time will tell. That kind of arrogance has been seen before in this country. It was seen in the Mulroney government and we know that many of those who supported Mulroney for eight years simply moved over to Toronto and are behind the scenes here making many of the same policies — that is, the ones who aren't in the seats over there — because it's the same crew.

What we're seeing is an arrogance and a level of real, barefaced contempt for the people of Ontario. With absolutely everything you do in your spending policies, you are assuming that you will not be caught out. You are assuming that people will not see you as the flim-flam men you are, hiding the money, moving it around, trying to convince them the money is still there and trying to show us that you're spending money that in fact you're not spending in the areas that we expect.

You have a revenue problem. You have promised the people of this province a tax cut for which you are

prepared to raise our deficit. We know you didn't make a statement in November because you had a \$3-billion problem you couldn't solve. So what did you come up with? The huge download of mega-week. People are not fooled. Those of you who bother to go to your constituencies and bother to speak to people know that the people are not fooled and they will not accept that black is white simply because you tell them it is. They will not accept that everybody's out of step except your Johnny. They're not going to accept that, because they know that's not the case.

They are beginning to understand that they are the victims of a very serious plot, a plot to try to fool them into believing that all is well, even while all about them they see their schools struggling to educate children, they see their hospitals struggling to provide health care, they see their municipalities struggling to maintain basic services like water and roads and they know that the costs of that over the long term are huge.

They know that you have perfected a way of handing down your responsibilities to others, that you're not prepared to be accountable for the decisions that you're making. You have to pass those decisions off to a hospital restructuring commission, to an Education Improvement Commission, to municipalities, to hospitals, to the OMA, to whoever you can shuffle off your responsibilities and you can say, "They made the decision; we didn't make the decision." The reality is no one is fooled. You are creating a situation in which others elected in other areas are having to make decisions that they do not wish to make, that they do not think are wise, and their experience is that when they go to talk to you as the next level of government, you pay no attention.

I wouldn't like to pretend that you're all alone in this. You learned this very well. You learned this very well from the Mulroney Tories, who began the process of downloading service costs on to the provinces from the federal level. The tragedy is that the Liberals now in office have been better at it — because they are good at implementation — than Mulroney ever thought he would be. So you learned that lesson well and you're simply doing it to the next level of government: download, download, download.

Who suffers at the end of the game? Every single citizen in this province suffers at the end of the game. So if you expect, as your whip expects, that we will not take every opportunity democratically available to us to expose what you are trying to do, he's wrong; it's our job. We accept our responsibility, and part of our responsibility as the third party is to name the duplicity that is going on in terms of the spending patterns of your government. It is our job to stop the shell game and to help people to understand that this elaborate series of uploads, downloads, crossloads and cuts is designed to confuse them, designed to divert their attention from your accountability as a government, designed to make them believe your claims that you are not in fact creating the kind of havoc that you are in our communities.

People are not as foolish as you think. You will not continue to fool all the people. In fact, I suggest to you that you are at the point now where you're not even fooling all the people some of the time. I suggest to you

that there are many, many people who are not fooled at all and who are going to call you on your game.

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Everything we can do to assist them to ask the tough questions of you and to ask you to be accountable, we will do, because we understand that their lives are being affected immediately and seriously by the spending powers you have in this province. We understand that they need to hold you accountable for the decisions you are making that are causing misery to so many people in this province. We understand, because we've been in your seats, that it is not possible to avoid accountability in the long run. We know that people are not going to believe that black is white for much longer and that they are going to notice that it's Johnny who is out of step and not them. So it is very, very important for us to continue this process of naming what is happening with your spending at this time with the supply motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure to rise and speak on this particular motion. Today we're discussing a housekeeping bill of sorts. I'd like to take this opportunity to take care of some actual housekeeping of my own.

Over the last couple of years, I've noticed that a lot of members are quite unabashed about drawing attention to their own riding and about singing the praises of their respective home towns. I've talked about the riding of Northumberland on occasion, but I've never really had the opportunity to discuss it in the kind of detail that it really deserves. I believe such a discussion would be of interest to other members of this House, particularly the members on the opposite side.

Mr Gerretsen: What's this got to do with interim supply?

The Acting Speaker: Are you on a question or comment or are you in debate?

Mr Gerretsen: He's out of order.

The Acting Speaker: This is for the two-minute questions and comments.

Mr Galt: I'm out of order, then. Go ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I always listen with great interest to the members for Lake Nipigon and London Centre and their discourse on issues that are before the House currently.

The people of Ontario should once again understand what this is really all about. This is about downloading on to our local municipalities an extra \$1 billion of service costs that are currently being paid for by the provincial government. It's in areas which are most likely to grow over the next number of years, such as, for example, health care spending, social housing, social welfare spending. These are the areas where there will be an increased demand for services in the years to come, as we are an aging population.

It's interesting that the government has done whatever it can over the last four to five weeks and months to indicate to the people of Ontario that there's absolutely nothing to worry about, that this is not really happening to them, in the hope that the local councils, which will be

saddled with dealing with these budgetary requirements, will somehow not allow a 20% or 30% tax increase to take place. We know, from all the figures we've obtained from the various municipalities, that they anticipate their local budgets will go up anywhere from 20% to 30% as a result of this downloading.

What's going to happen? Taxes on real estate are not going to go up by 20% or 30%. The local councils, under the pressures they're under, will in effect be forced to reduce standards, to reduce services, particularly in those areas which have traditionally been serviced by the provincial government. That's really what this is all about. I think the people of Ontario should say no to this attempt.

Ms Martel: I want to commend my colleagues the members for Lake Nipigon and London Centre, and I want to focus very particularly on some of the comments made regarding the downloading.

I was really interested yesterday as I watched the news to see Prime Minister Chrétien now promising that some of the money the federal government has not transferred to the provinces over the last number of years is now, surprisingly, going to be returned to the provinces. I thought, "My, my, we must be in an election period." What was also interesting is that not anywhere near the amount of money that the federal government has cut from Ontario, in this case some \$3 billion in health care alone by Jean Chrétien, is of course going to be returned to the province of Ontario.

As I watched Chrétien, I see what Chrétien has done being repeated here in the province of Ontario, because now we have Mike Harris and this Conservative government who like to whine and cry and bellyache about the federal offloading, as they did today, doing exactly the same thing to the people in the province of Ontario, exactly the same thing.

During mega-week, this government had the audacity to offload any number of public and social services on to the property taxpayers in Ontario, and they try to fool the people and tell them that in fact the tradeoff is going to be equal. Everyone across this province knows that property taxpayers are going to be about \$1 billion short. No one believes that any of the special funds the government purports to put in place are actually going to receive those moneys. People in my community are going to be charged \$105 million more directly as a result of the offload of this Tory government. No one is fooled by what you are doing.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Indeed it's my pleasure to stand and just take a couple of minutes to respond to some of what we've heard opposite here today. The bottom line is, they just don't get it. They just don't get that the doom-and-gloom scenario is wearing awfully thin among the working people in this province. They know better. They're smarter than you give them credit for.

As the Toronto Sun correctly observed, "To all those that would suggest," in their Chicken Little routine opposite, "that the sky is falling, the sky is falling," the truth about what's happening in the province of Ontario,

something you don't want to deal with, is that 46,000 new, full-time jobs were created just last month alone.

We're still spending. We're spending 50% more on health care per person than Quebec, three times more than Saskatchewan and 100% more than New Brunswick. We're spending 70% more per person on programs to fight violence against women. We're spending \$1 billion more on education than if we spent the per-capita average of the other provinces. We're spending more on health care. As you know full well, last year's budget went up \$300 million; this year it's going up again.

We've kept all of our promises. The province's economy is on fire. We've seen new investments. We've seen job creation. We've seen prosperity and optimism return to the province of Ontario. In fact, I think the article also commented that consumer confidence is up 22% since we were elected. Housing starts, even in Toronto, are up 45%. In total, the Ontario economy is on fire. This province is headed in absolutely the right direction: back to prosperity, back to hope, away from doom and gloom.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. I just want to remind the members that this is just Tuesday afternoon. Let's just keep it down a little bit.

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I know it was touched on briefly here a few moments ago, the sewage and water treatment plants in the province of Ontario, where many of the studies have been completed and now —

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We've already had four two-minute —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Would you please continue, the member for Cornwall.

Interjections.

Mr Cleary: — and are starting to worry right now that provincial government may not be there to upgrade the plants. Also in health care, with all the savings that I understood were supposed to be poured back into the health care system, in our part of eastern Ontario, where over a year ago the minister had announced a dialysis machine for Cornwall and many of our residents are travelling back and forth to Kingston and Ottawa three times a week, there are no facilities available yet.

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Last winter the Kidney Foundation of Canada contacted the minister to say: "We are writing to support Mr Cleary's concern for his constituents and to share the concerns. The situation has gone on far too long. We are requesting that this be rectified immediately." But that's not much help to the people in my community and their families who are spending three hours or four hours or six hours a week travelling back and forth.

The Acting Speaker: I just wanted to explain that I had actually ruled the member for Northumberland out of order, so it was one, two, three, four. If that isn't satisfactory and I did allow one too many, I can't think of anybody more entitled than the member for Cornwall.

Member for London Centre, two minutes to respond.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, certainly we all would agree with you that it's always a pleasure when the member for

Cornwall gets up to speak, and I'd like to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands and the member for Sudbury East as well.

I'd like to mention to the member for Scarborough East that he epitomized in his response exactly what I was talking about. I could not have hoped for a better example about the diffusion of reality than he provided. It is exactly the methodology that I am talking about that is employed again and again by the members of this government, to try and not answer the questions that are asked about spending but instead to pile on defensive after defensive comment about how they have spent on this and they have spent on that; to make partisan claims about what is real and what is not real; to make every effort to try and discredit the kinds of concerns that members of the opposition parties bring forward on behalf of their constituents. I could not have hoped that a member of the government party would demonstrate to the extent that the member for Scarborough East did exactly the kind of arrogance, the kind of effort to obscure the truth, that he did.

I almost feel as though the complimentary comments of my colleagues and the supplementary comments of my colleagues pale before this demonstration of exactly the problem I was identifying in my speech. It absolutely proved every point I made and it will not be lost on the people of Ontario who are watching this debate on the interim supply motion.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and maybe we'll get rolling in the proper sequence this time. It was a little surprise for me to find that we're into two-minute hits in that particular debate, but I certainly appreciate the opportunity my fellow member for Scarborough East had to rebut in that two minutes. It was certainly great information that he brought forth at that particular time.

I started out to make reference to Northumberland. Northumberland, as a riding, is much like a microcosm of the whole province of Ontario, and what's happening in my riding is very similar to what's going on in the rest of the province. The people in Northumberland are really no different than the people across Ontario. They work hard, they play hard and they want the things that we all cherish: good jobs, a clean environment, hope for the future and for their children. Our government is providing a new business climate and is committed to making all of those things once again possible.

We've been through a bleak political drought for the last 10 years, 10 years where the debt has tripled, 10 years where the spending has doubled. I appreciated some of the comments being made by the members for Lake Nipigon and London Centre, like the sky is falling and all of the terrible things, but let me tell you the kind of future we've left for our children they'll be paying for for the rest of their lives. Somebody who is 25 years old, according to the Fraser Institute, will pay \$290,000 just for the debt that has been created in this province by governments such as yours.

Almost two years ago, this province embarked in a new direction, and I can tell you that new direction was

none too soon. It was really high time that a new direction did come. It was a direction much different from the path formerly travelled, and thank heavens. While the road to change has not been easy and, of course, it never is easy with change, there can be no doubt that Ontarians are better off today than they were some 22 months ago. In fact last month, as was mentioned a few minutes ago, some 46,000 new jobs were created in Ontario and real disposable income is up.

Has anyone ever wondered why the Prime Minister called an election on Sunday? I'll tell you why. It's because of what's happening in the province of Ontario. He wants to ride in on the back of the success of what this government is bringing to the Ontario and he's taking no chance on missing it, even three and a half years into a four-year mandate, and he could go for five years. How often has that ever happened in this country?

Let me tell you what happened a little while ago to the provincial Liberal Party. When they were in government they took a chance on going early, and look at the kind of devastation that happened to that particular government and the kind of drain that they went down because they went out too early. You would have thought their federal cousins would have understood this and would have had a look at what happened to the Peterson government.

We are seeing certainly a resurgence in home building in the riding of Northumberland. According to the Cobourg Economic Development Commission, we have now regained all of those jobs lost during the recession. In my area most of the industries are quite small, and they don't really create the kind of headlines that you might see in some of the national press, but it's the kind of solid growth that's needed in the province and it's certainly moving ahead. There is indeed good reason for renewed optimism. Today companies in my area are hiring and expanding their operations, and that's even better news.

The story is the same across the province. Investments by businesses are up and on the rise. Consumer confidence is up some 22% over last year, auto production reached a record high in 1996, and economic forecasts call for Ontario's economy to grow by more than 4% this year. That's real and substantial growth, good reasons why Ontarians are feeling good about the future, good reasons why Ontarians are feeling optimistic about the future. In Northumberland home sales are picking up, as they are across the province, and in Toronto, after years of a depressed market, strong home sales are starting to push prices even higher. This is a definite indication that we are on the mend.

Retail sales in the province also jumped some 1.1% in February over January, and they were up some 7.7% from the same period last year. I think as we looked around at Christmastime and saw the shopping sprees that were going on and the kind of spending that was happening in Ontario, it was pretty exceptional. I went around apologizing to my Liberal friends — I was looking for some NDP, but I did apologize to my Liberal friends for all the traffic jams that were occurring in the parking lots at the shopping centres. That was the kind of shopping that was going on, the kind of spending that was going on in this province at that time. It took me as long as 15

to 20 minutes just to get out of a shopping centre. Maybe the Liberals didn't happen to notice that, but an apology to some of them did kind of bring it to their attention.

All of these indicators point to the same conclusion: Things are getting better all the time.

1640

Other reforms undertaken by our government have found a willing champion in Northumberland. Just recently a new city was formed on the eastern boundary, the city of Quinte West. It was Murray and Sidney townships joining with the city of Trenton and the village of Frankford. My hat is off to the local politicians who had the vision to see the benefits of amalgamation. Change, of course, is not easy when it comes to things like amalgamation. Elsewhere in the riding, the town of Campbellford and the township of Seymour have also come together in a united municipality and a new council starting January 1, 1998.

There have been literally very few complaints from the area of Quinte West and I've had absolutely no complaints about the amalgamation in Campbellford-Seymour. I think this points out the success we've had with some of the things we introduced in Bill 26, which was so controversial. Bill 26 and some other legislation set the stage for this kind of restructuring that local councils could meet, follow the rules, and then, as it's laid out, the minister "shall" approve their decision and their desire to amalgamate. Never before have we been able to get municipalities to restructure in this harmonious sort of way. Yes, some of them are a bit controversial, but nothing to what they were in the past. Councils in each municipality know there is strength in numbers. The new combined municipality will have a greater ability to attract economic development and tourism dollars.

In fact, tourism is a \$60-million-a-year activity in Northumberland. It employs more than 5,000 people; that is about 14% of the workforce. It provides summer employment for students, the children of our residents, and it benefits the people in Northumberland through recreational and cultural facilities developed to serve the tourist trade.

I would urge the members of this House to holiday our way this summer and to come and explore the sights and sounds we have to offer, sights like Presqu'île Park, which receives a quarter of a million visitors a year, or the Cobourg Waterfront Festival that attracts some 75,000 to 100,000 people for the July 1 weekend. I'd encourage you to travel the Apple Route, which winds through some of the most picturesque countryside in all Ontario, to join us for the annual Brighton Applefest in September and for Colborne's Apple Blossom Tyme, for the many fairs that occur in our riding: in Campbellford, Roseneath and Port Hope, as well as in Warkworth.

Mr Gerretsen: Are you talking about the penitentiary there?

Mr Galt: We have great ones.

Mr Speaker, I wish I had more time to tell you about Northumberland and all of the great things we're doing there to attract new economic development and improve our quality of life. But suffice it to say that what we're experiencing in Northumberland is being duplicated

across this province: more jobs, more investment, a revitalized economy and the return of consumer confidence. All of these indicators are good news for Ontario.

I'm looking forward to Finance Minister Ernie Eves's second budget on May 6, because I believe there will be more good news for Ontarians, news that the deficit is being tamed, that provincial revenues are up because of our 15% tax cut to date, and that Ontarians can once again look forward to a brighter, more prosperous future. That is what is important to Ontarians in towns and cities across this province and that is what is important to people in my home riding of Northumberland. I'm proud to be part of a government that is delivering what the people of Ontario want and need: hope and opportunity for today and for our children's futures.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Boyd: It's always a great pleasure to hear about the constituents of our colleagues, and I think we all know a little bit more about Northumberland from its member's point of view.

I'm surprised the member didn't talk about some of the concerns of the municipalities in his region which are staggering to try and imagine how they are going to cope with the kind of download that this government has brought forward. I am surprised he didn't talk about the concerns of a largely rural area with the downloading of the rural tax credit, and I'm surprised he didn't mention the concerns that I'm sure he hears all the time from people who share the concerns that we spoke about on this side of the House.

I think it is important for us to talk about our ridings and it is very appropriate for us in a debate like this to talk about how the issue at hand affects our constituents, but I must say I find it hard to believe that the county of Northumberland is a little slice of heaven that doesn't face some of the same problems that the rest of the province has and that the people who run the municipalities of Northumberland, the people who live on the farms and in the villages and in the towns in Northumberland, do not share the same concerns of others that we have heard.

I would say to the member that he is quite astute when he talks about the kinds of interlocking issues between federal politics and provincial politics, but he forgets that the same is true around the interlocking issues of all three levels of politics, and he underestimates his constituents if he thinks they don't understand the real concerns that they will continue to have as a result of the downloading that his government is perpetrating against them.

Mr Gilchrist: I find it interesting that the member for London Centre couldn't relate how my colleague from Northumberland's comments in fact apply to the matter before us here today. It's unfortunate that the myopia opposite blinds her to the obvious connection that in Northumberland, as in most ridings, if not all ridings in this province, there are good-news stories. They abound. The province is excited, it's optimistic, it's happening again.

I happen to have a farm in that riding. I know that what Dr Galt has been recounting here today is but the tip of the iceberg in terms of what's happening in his home riding, in terms of the economic development, in

terms of the investment our government is making in the infrastructure in that riding, issues such as transportation safety, a new barrier going up in the middle of the 401, creating all sorts of new investment and all sorts of new jobs. Port Hope and Cobourg have cooperated in forming a joint hospital commission to be able to put their stamp on how health care best can be delivered in that county.

We've seen all sorts of new businesses open. I happen to have a friend who started a new restaurant, immediately hiring 20 staff. At the other end of the spectrum, there's a gentleman who has proposed a housing development of 1,600 homes. Its passage by Cobourg council is imminent. Imagine that: 1,600 new homes, a staggering investment in a community that's only 13,500 people strong. That's what's happening in Northumberland.

I'm sure the members opposite have exactly the same experiences in their home ridings. That isn't to suggest, and nobody on this side would ever suggest, that there aren't problems, that there aren't challenges that still face us all. I've never said and I never will say that we're perfect, but what I will not accept is that the way to motivate this province is to spout doom and gloom. It's about being optimistic, it's about leading by example, and that's what this government is proud to do.

Mr Gerretsen: It's always with great interest that I listen to the member for Northumberland. It's a riding that I have an opportunity to travel through on at least two occasions a week as I make my way from Kingston to Toronto and it's certainly a very beautiful part of this province.

From his speech, however, I wasn't quite sure, with his comments and with the tremendous things that are happening there and are happening in some other places in Ontario as well, whether or not he was actually endorsing the federal government and the actions it has taken over the last three or four years and all of the jobs that it's created. I'm sure he would like all of the local candidates in his riding in this federal election to know that and I'm very pleased that he's actually endorsing the federal government and all of the actions that it took, because he couldn't possibly have talked about what the provincial government is doing to our municipalities.

The provincial government is downloading an extra \$1 billion worth of costs that had formerly been paid by the province, and they are once again in the areas of social services, health care, ambulance care, in the elimination of ferry fees, as they have done in my riding, and in so many other areas, the area of social housing, the area of farm tax rebates. Farm tax rebates will now have to be paid for out of the local real estate property tax level in each municipality, which is going to bankrupt the smaller, more rural municipalities.

If he'd been talking about that, then he would surely be talking about the horrible things this government is doing to local government and to the local municipalities by causing the property taxes to increase. We haven't seen that yet, but we'll see it next year and we'll see it the year after. That's obviously not what he was talking about. He was talking about the great record of the federal Liberals.

1650

Ms Martel: As I listened to the member for Northumberland talk about what the government had done and

how things are improving in his riding, I wondered why it was he was remiss in reminding the public out there of the very specific promises his government made in the Common Sense Revolution and during the last election which have been broken by his very same government.

Let me start with the no cuts to health care promise that was made to the people of the province, and the very specific promise this Premier made that there would be no hospital closures. The fact of the matter is that over \$800 million has come out of hospital budgets in this province alone, with another \$500 million to come out next year, and nowhere near half of that money has been reinvested back into the health care system in this province.

In my community alone there are two hospitals that are going to close despite the promise the Premier made in the televised debate during the election campaign. There are another three that are going to close in Thunder Bay. There are another 10 that are going to close in this community alone. What happened to that very important promise?

Then the Tories promised there would be no cuts to classroom education. Well, in my community, because of the cuts this government has made in transfers, in the GLGs to the two boards, both boards have had to cut special education, have had to cut speech therapists, have had to cut back on libraries, on teaching staff, on custodial staff, and a number of boards have had to cut their junior kindergarten programs, directly as a result of the reduced funding from this Conservative government.

This government promised there would be no new user fees. That's why seniors are now paying a copayment right across this province, and there have been a myriad of user fees at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

You're also going to download over \$1 billion of new costs on to property taxpayers despite the promise you made not to do that to them.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Mr Galt: It's a pleasure to respond to the various members who have made the two-minute hits, particularly the member for Scarborough East, who supported all the positive things that are happening and the development that's going on in the riding of Northumberland. He's pretty close to it, having property in the riding, and certainly there are an awful lot of good things that are happening there.

The member for London Centre made reference to downloading. I don't know where they get this idea the intent is revenue-neutral at various —

Interjection: Uploading.

Mr Galt: Uploading, sure. We're uploading on education some \$5.4 billion that we're going to take over, that has been on residential tax since the beginning of time. They're getting tired of it and they've been asking for a long time that the province take it over. We're doing it. We're responding to what the public have been asking.

Further to some of her comments, I can tell you we now have more jobs in Ontario than there have ever been in this province. Just go out and have a look.

Interjection: Ever, ever.

Mr Galt: Ever in time.

The member for Kingston and The Islands made reference to travelling through the riding and something about support of the federal Liberals. Obviously he is supporting what they've been doing, things like taking \$2.1 billion out of our health care budget. Where have the cuts come from in health care? As the member for Sudbury East mentioned, they've come from the federal government. There have been no cuts in health care by the province. We promised and guaranteed \$17.4 billion. We have kept that promise and we have increased that. We're up to \$17.7 billion now and I wouldn't be surprised but we'll be at \$18 billion before this calendar year is out.

Where the cuts have come from is the federal government and the federal Liberals. If you want to have a look, just go and check out what they're transferring to this province. The weak promise we got from the Prime Minister while he's on the campaign trail that he's going to give a little pittance back: not very much.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to join the debate on interim supply. We're almost as busy in this chamber this afternoon as finance departments are across Her Majesty's Ontario government. I have in my hand a memo from one of the finance branches of one of several departments of Her Majesty's government, and it appears there are scores of hardworking public servants who have been directed by their superiors to tell all the public servants that because of this debate the May 1 payroll may be impaired. According to my information, which comes from an internal memo, the finance departments and scores of payroll clerks are beavering away, calling tens of thousands of public servants, telling them that the May 1 payroll may be a few days late.

I just make the observation that it's too bad the government House leader, who is also Chair of Management Board, didn't think about this as he prepared his scheduling of what is always an important debate.

Perhaps more important, when I understand that on this beautiful spring day scores of finance clerks are working diligently under the capable direction of Messrs Harris, Eves, Johnson, Runciman et al, making sure that thousands of public servants know a democratic dialogue in this assembly may interfere with the payroll deadline at the end of the month, I just wish and pray most sincerely that Charlie Harnick's family support plan and all its panoply of public servants were as efficient. I just wish the family support plan under the leadership of the Attorney General was as concerned and as efficient about meeting their deadlines and the concerns of the tens of thousands of single moms and single dads and thousands of dependent children as the directors of finance and senior officials in the Ontario government are today about the efficacy of this debate and any impact the debate might have on the end-of-the-month payroll.

I was delighted to be here to hear the previous submissions from the member for Northumberland and the former Attorney General, the member for London Centre. They always make good speeches.

Like the member from Kingston, I have the pleasure of driving through Northumberland county twice a week; almost every week but not quite. I know the area well. I know the Big Apple. I read the Cobourg paper. I read the Port Hope Evening Guide. I see where the local member is out at the Goodwill. He was a very obvious participant in Volunteer Day.

It's hard to imagine that Gord Gilchrist, the father of that incredibly capable and retiring member for Scarborough East — I saw in the Cobourg paper the other day that Stevie Gilchrist's daddy, formerly the MP for Scarborough East, somehow didn't quite manage to win the Tory nomination. I just wonder, how could a daddy with a son so confident, so clever, so resourceful as the redoubtable member from Scarborough Canadian Tire ever lose a nomination, particularly in so blessed a domain as Northumberland county?

Listening to the member for Northumberland talk about the economic performance of the Ontario government, I am reminded of Jack Horner. Jack Horner, you will well recall, was a very prominent member of the western Conservative caucus. Jack fell out with Joe Clark, changed spots and joined the Liberal Party of Pierre Trudeau. As he prepared for the 1984 election as a turncoat Liberal, Jack was just getting tired of the Don Mazankowskis and the Harvie Andres beating him up about the unemployment data, which in the recession of the early 1980s were higher than anyone wanted. Finally in exasperation Jack Horner said, "I just wish those naysayers in the opposition would stop talking about 13%, 14% unemployment and start talking about the joy and the opportunity of 86%, 87% employment." It was an interesting argument. Regrettably, in Crowfoot a few years later it was not persuasive and Jack Horner was consigned to retirement and all that that brings.

1700

Yes, there is good news. I don't think there is anyone, not even the most negative nabob, the most caterwauling oppositionist around, who would deny that whether in Doug Ford country or in Rusty Baird country or perhaps even in Marion Boyd country there is not good news. Of course there is good news, lots of good news. People of Ontario are resourceful, optimistic, hardworking people. But there is also other news.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): We had some aliens here last week.

Mr Conway: Well, the member from Humber says we had some aliens last week.

Mr Ford: John Sewell.

Mr Conway: The member from Etobicoke said, "John Sewell."

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Etobicoke-Humber, there is no exchange. He has the floor.

Mr Conway: I've called John Sewell many things; I don't think I've ever called him an alien, and I would caution anyone from Metropolitan Toronto to engage Mr Sewell in that kind of a debate, because —

Mr Pouliot: How well do you know Mr Sewell?

Mr Conway: Thanks to the government of which you were a part, Mr Pouliot, I got to know Mr Sewell very

well, and his appreciation for the rhythms and realities of rural Ontario was positively breathtaking. But I certainly will defer to Mr Sewell when it comes to the urban quality and the urban character of the city in which we now find ourselves.

But there is a concern abroad in the land, not just in Renfrew but, I believe, in Northumberland and in Toronto and in Lake Nipigon about continuing high levels of unemployment. No one is happy. In my area the current reported unemployment rate is about 12.5%. That is higher than anyone locally, provincially or nationally would like.

Youth unemployment rates are pretty well everywhere in the province in the 17% to 20% range, and that's too high, much too high. There is all kinds of evidence that a lot of young people have withdrawn from the marketplace because they feel there is just no place for them, and we all have to be concerned about that.

About health care — and before I even get to health care I must make the point that the Economist magazine — I listened, again, to the member for Northumberland talking about the joyful wonders of the Harris revolution and all of the wonder and magic and results that it is producing. I was struck a few months ago by the noted Economist magazine.

In its January 25, 1997 edition, the Economist, which is not, I don't think, by any objective standard a lunatic or raving socialist oracle, said the following, talking about Ontario — in fact the opening line of the article, under a picture of Bomber Harris is, "Ontario is Tory territory." It's hard to quarrel with that if one looks at the history of 20th-century Ontario. But talking about the Harris revolution, the article concludes:

"There are optimistic forecasts for Ontario's economy, which is climbing out of a recession. So the Conservatives may manage to cut taxes and the deficit as well. Yet as one commentator has remarked, the changes on the way are less of a revolution than a whirligig. Whirligigs," the Economist concludes, "have a way of spinning out of control, and even of savaging the man in charge."

That's the London-based Economist just a couple of months ago. In fact the article was a response to the so-called megaweek announcements about a new scheme of things between local governments and the province, and Who Does What and who pays for what. It is quite obvious that independent observers like the Economist are not as confident as the government bench about the intermediate and long-term success of the current revolution.

I was also noting in the New York Times of February 10, 1997, an editorial article which appeared under the title, "How California Betrayed Its Schools," and knowing as I do of the interest of members like the member for Durham East in the education question, I was struck by what the New York Times of February 10, 1997, was saying about education in California.

To summarize the article, it is basically this. Ten or 15 years ago, California, which had for much of the postwar period been a leader not just in public schooling but in some very good results in public schools, embraced what the article would claim were some right-wing fads very popular at the time. Regrettably, a decade or two later

even Republicans like Pete Wilson now admit that those fads were very damaging to the long-term health of education and all of the benefits that public education provides.

It is very interesting, quite frankly, to see Governor Wilson in California now reversing a lot of the policy initiatives that the current Minister of Education for Ontario seems to think are magical cures for Ontario. In fact, if you want to find out what the Republican governor in California is doing, you just simply have to look at much of what Harris and Snobelen are intending for Ontario in the last years of this decade and reverse it.

Governor Wilson and the California Republicans are substantially increasing investments in the public schools of California. They are particularly concerned about increasing the investment and reducing class sizes in elementary and primary education. They are undertaking significant new initiatives in the area of teacher education and professional development for elementary and secondary teachers.

Again, it is interesting that we seem to be embracing now, under the leadership of Mike Harris and John Snobelen, much of the failed policies of a state like California, and I don't know, on the basis of the New York Times analysis, that we want to replicate the California failure, as this editorial would have you believe, of much of the last 10 to 15 years.

I want to talk a little bit this afternoon about health care, because without a doubt, as is obvious from the current national campaign and is obvious from the daily question period and other debates, no more important issue faces Ontarians and Canadians elsewhere than the state of our health care.

I want to be a little even-tempered and hopefully fairminded about this. On the hospital question, I was struck the other day by an article which appeared in all of the metropolitan papers looking at a study that has been concluded by Statistics Canada. Now I'm reading from the Toronto Globe and Mail of April 22, 1997, the headline of which is "Cutbacks Not the Only Cause of Vanishing Hospital Beds." The article goes on to talk about what has happened across Canada, province by province, in the seven-year period between 1988 and 1995.

It is interesting. When you look at the reduction in hospital beds, whether it was — and we're talking now a period of seven years so in Ontario, for example, these data include the Peterson Liberals and the Rae New Democrats. In Saskatchewan we would have, for example, the Devine Conservatives and the Romanow New Democrats. In British Columbia, for example, we would have the Social Credit of Vander Zalm and some years of the Harcourt New Democrats. If you look at all provinces, hospital beds have been reduced, and reduced substantially, in that period of time.

In Newfoundland it's a 19% reduction in hospital beds from 1988 to 1995; in Saskatchewan, a 35% reduction; in Ontario it's 27%; in New Brunswick it's 34%. The obvious conclusion from the article is that between 1988 and 1995 governments of all stripes in all provinces cut hospital beds, and cut them substantially.

I think oppositionists have to be fairminded about that reality, and I'd dare to say that if any of us, the Liberals

under Dalton McGuinty or Lyn McLeod or the New Democrats under Bob Rae or Howard Hampton, were in office in Ontario today, there would be continuing pressure on the hospital sector, simply because, as the Statscan study makes plain, there are new surgical techniques, new attitudes that are clearly providing alternatives to institutional care.

1710

Having said that, we look to Ontario and we see a cut post-1995. In Ontario from 1988 to 1995, governments under the Liberals and the New Democrats cut hospital beds by 27%. We've now got a plan in Ontario, under the leadership of Jim Wilson and Professor Sinclair at the health ministry and at the commission, to substantially reduce hospital beds and the number of hospitals much further than those cuts of 1988 to 1995.

We have in my community, for example, a decision from the Ontario government and its agent, the commission, to reduce the number of hospitals from two to one. We are losing the century-old Pembroke Civic Hospital. It has been ordered to close its doors by the end of this year. On the weekend, we had a report out of Cornwall from the district health council that the long-standing Cornwall General Hospital is to close its doors. A few weeks ago we saw Jim Wilson and Duncan Sinclair order the closure of the Montfort Hospital, order the closure of the Riverside Hospital in Ottawa, order the closure of the Grace Hospital in Ottawa. Jim Wilson and Duncan Sinclair have been doing that and they will continue to do that here in Metro and in London and in Hamilton.

What concerns me is the depth and the severity of these cuts. I accept that there have to be changes and I'm not here to argue that the status quo is an option. I just want to tell you that in my community of Pembroke, through the cuts that have been ordered by the Minister of Health and his agent, Duncan Sinclair, we are going to lose 39% of our acute care beds. We are going to lose 27% of our hospital budget in the Pembroke area. Let me repeat those numbers. We're not only losing one hospital, the Pembroke Civic Hospital, but we're losing 39% of our acute care beds and we're losing 27% of our overall budget, and the doors of the Pembroke Civic Hospital have been ordered closed by Minister Wilson and Duncan Sinclair at the end of this calendar year, which is almost eight months away — not very much time.

When I look at the cuts that Minister Wilson and Duncan Sinclair have ordered for some other places, in Thunder Bay and in Sudbury the cuts are deep and severe. In Thunder Bay they're losing 50% of their acute care beds, 37% of their chronic beds and approximately 30% of their hospital budget. In Sudbury, again deep cuts.

At the risk of causing you some discomfort, Mr Speaker, I notice that the cuts in Ottawa, Toronto and London are substantially less and substantially lighter than they are in places like Pembroke, Sudbury and Thunder Bay, and that gives myself, the local member, and all my constituents in the rural, small-town, upper Ottawa Valley a deep level of concern — all the more so because before the cuts that were ordered by Minister Wilson and the commission, before any of those cuts, we are told by the Ontario Ministry of Health that in

Renfrew county we are well below provincial health expenditure average, well below the provincial per capita average for OHIP expenditures, well below the provincial average for hospital and related facilities expenditure. On many of the key indicators, in Renfrew county, including the city of Pembroke, before any of these cuts even take effect, we are told by the Ministry of Health that we are well below provincial averages. I'll cite just one.

Quoting from the Health Services Restructuring Commission report on Pembroke, tabled on December 3, 1996, we are told that when we look at per capita health expenditures in Ontario the provincial average is \$1,595 and in Renfrew county our average is \$1,273, so before any cuts take place, we're told by the commission that in Renfrew county we're at only 80% of the per capita average for overall health expenditures. My constituents are told they have to now live with the loss of their century-old civic hospital, that they're going to have to lose 39% of their acute care beds, they're going to have to lose 27% of their hospital budget in Pembroke, and we're told by Minister Wilson and Premier Harris that this is not going to have any impact on services.

I want to take a moment to read to you a letter that appeared in the Renfrew county press the other week from a constituent of mine. I spoke to her family just the other day, and I'm sure they won't mind my reading her letter. I ask members to listen carefully to what this 74-year-old woman who is suffering with cancer had to say in a letter to the editor which was published in all of the north Renfrew press, a letter to the editor from Mrs Alice Dufresne of 551 Highway 17 West, Pembroke:

"To the editor;

"On February 27, 1997 we travelled" — her husband and herself — "from Pembroke to Ottawa" — a distance of 150 kilometres, in winter weather — "to attend an appointment of 45 minutes at the Ottawa Civic Hospital cancer clinic" for a particular procedure.

"We left Pembroke" in the early afternoon and we were "on our way back" home along Highway 417 near the Almonte turnoff when "we had an accident." The car in which they were driving rolled over, in presumably winter conditions, three or four times. The ambulance took this 74-year-old woman and her 78-year-old husband back into the Ottawa Civic Hospital, where they were placed under care.

"We were not given," at the Ottawa Civic Hospital, so much as "a drink of water." We were left, writes this 74-year-old cancer patient, "in soaking wet clothes and lying on stretchers with very little care" for hours.

"Thank the Lord," Mrs Dufresne writes, "for my daughter-in-law who was also involved in the accident. Without her help I would not have even made it to the washroom."

At a quarter to midnight on that day, they were asked to leave the Ottawa Civic Hospital with no place to go, this 74-year-old cancer patient and her 79-year-old husband.

"What were they thinking?" Mrs Dufresne writes. "My husband is 78 and in no shape to get around.

"I am 74" years of age "and in very poor health.

"If it was not for" the fact that my son was "in the area, we would have been out on the street" at midnight

on this winter day. My son asked the staff at the hospital "to keep us until morning. Their answer was, 'No!'

"Is this the way senior citizens are going to be treated" in Mike Harris's Ontario?

"Mike Harris, do you not have a mother or do you not think" you too will get old some day?

"I was highly insulted by the treatment we experienced. Are old people now going to be left to die without care?"

So writes a 74-year-old woman with cancer from Pembroke, Ontario, about her experience just a few weeks ago.

I'm not here to suggest that these examples are happening every day or everywhere, but we saw at the Peterborough Civic Hospital a few months ago another example of a family who went to visit an elderly relative, a parent, only to find that 82-year-old parent dead on a hospital bed in the corridor. Yes, Minister Wilson then reacted very quickly with additional resources to, I think it was, the Peterborough Civic Hospital. There is no doubt that there is a growing concern about what these cuts are doing to quality care across Ontario and across Canada, as Mr Chrétien is finding out this week.

1720

Mr Ford: There's a senior citizens' attachment to that hospital and senior citizens —

The Deputy Speaker: There will be a questions and comments period afterwards.

Mr Conway: I don't think, Mr Ford, you want to be quoted as saying that about this woman who, with her husband — you see, the reality of my rural constituents is, if you live on Highway 17 West in Pembroke, you have to drive 150 or 160 kilometres, one way, to the cancer clinic in Ottawa. If you are in Palmer Rapids or Barry's Bay or Whitney, you are driving 200, 250, 275 kilometres to the cancer clinic in Ottawa, and five months of the year it's winter. We have to be very sensitive to the concerns that Mrs Dufresne and her family have identified.

I raised, this past day and yesterday, issues around ambulance service in my part of rural Ontario. I want to reiterate that point this afternoon. I see the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay is here. He'll know what I'm talking about; certainly the members from Muskoka and Nipissing and Renfrew and Haliburton and Parry Sound will know very well. Let me just again repeat the story of earlier today.

I understand what the government is doing. They have decided that in the new division of responsibility the full cost for land ambulance is going to transfer down to local government as part of the Who Does What trade. I understand that's the policy. It has been decided, and I'm told it's unamendable.

All right, let's go one step further. Algonquin Provincial Park, a premier-destination tourist attraction, attracts nearly one million people each and every year. There is no local government. There is no municipality of Algonquin Park. The park is owned by Her Majesty in right of the people of Ontario. The local government is the province of Ontario. My question remains: Who is going to pay for the ambulance services in Algonquin Park?

I'll tell you, as it stands now, Algonquin Park — and on a busy weekend in the summer, there are 50,000

people in that park. I know from talking to the ambulance people at St Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry's Bay that they make several calls on a weekly basis up into the park. The average trip is 150 to 200 kilometres, round trip. The member from Muskoka will know well that the service on the other side comes in from Huntsville, and for them it will be a similar distance.

The question is: A father and a mother and kids are in at Opeongo Lake or Smoke Lake or Lake of Two Rivers and there is a serious accident. Last year a young student from — I think it was Carleton University —

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Manotick.

Mr Conway: From Manotick, a very fine young man, was in a tragic accident. Lightning struck and I believe killed this very bright young man in the southeastern area, west of Madawaska. An incredible effort was made to save that young man's life. But that accident occurred, I think, on a Friday afternoon in June or July in the southeastern part of Algonquin. Who pays for that?

We're not talking just a few cases: tens of thousands of people on a weekend and nearly one million people on an annual basis. I think people have a right to know what the new scheme is going to be. There is no local government. Who is going to pay the bill? If, for example, there is going to be a mileage charge, as it appears there is going to be, if I look at Rural/Metro and Laidlaw and the way they operate, certainly Rural/Metro in places like New York state, can you imagine the mileage charge that would attach to a trip from the Barry's Bay hospital up to Opeongo Lake and back, 175 kilometres? If you start piling other user charges on to that, you're going to have a bill that could be potentially \$1,000 without much effort.

My question remains, quite apart from the price — I say to my friend the member for Durham East, who looks a bit sceptical, if I'm wrong, well, then, you can correct me — but where does the bill go? If that person is from Bowmanville, does the municipality of Durham, do the people in Bowmanville get the bill? That's important information.

There are a lot of these cases, and there is no local government. The deep and abiding concern of my communities — Beachburg, Cobden, Foresters Falls, Barry's Bay, Whitney, Rolphton, Deux-Rivières, all of these rural places which have a very, very fragile local tax base — is, if the expectation is that the local property taxpayers in rural, small-town Ontario are expected to shoulder that burden, there is no doubt that it's going to have an impact on the quality of service and the availability of service. I say that since ambulance services are front-line health services, no government, whether it's led by Mike Harris or anybody else, is going to be able to get away with not responding to that concern and that pressure.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired. Questions or comments? The member for Sudbury.

Ms Martel: Sudbury East, Mr Speaker.

I want to commend the member for his comments and I want to follow up on some of the concerns he has raised with respect to health care and hospital care, because in the community I come from this is a very

serious issue and people just don't buy the Tory line that in fact they are reinvesting the money that is coming out of hospitals back into health care in our community.

The fact of the matter is, in our community the report that was done by a local group for two and a half years with respect to hospital restructuring was thrown out the window when this government came to power. Then the Health Services Restructuring Commission came in, they held one-day, private meetings behind closed doors with a number of stakeholders and came to the conclusion that they would close two of the three hospitals in our community; they would reduce the number of acute care beds by about 195; they would close seven operating rooms. But they conveniently forgot to mention how many hospital workers might be laid off as a consequence, how many front-line staff. They neglected to mention that.

At this point in time we are in the situation where this minister has still refused to come to our community and meet with a number of local groups which are very concerned that of the \$40 million that's going to come out of our community annually, only \$13.4 million has been recommended by the commission to be returned to our community. Less than a third of the money that's going to go out of our community for health care might come back, and that's only if this Minister of Health agrees with the commission's recommendations.

There is no one in my community who thinks we are better served with respect to health care in my community now under this Conservative government, and they are very concerned that with the huge amount of money that's going to come out, our health care is going to decline dramatically.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Renfrew North. He did mention my riding on a couple of occasions in his comments, and I'd like to clarify the record.

Just in some sequence here, he mentioned an article in the Economist, I believe it was in March 1997.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): That's in your riding?

Mr O'Toole: No, in the Economist. I'm going to cover a couple of things here, if you care to listen.

The article was really an important article. It had pretty much an American flavour to it, but it analysed education across the world and it did dwell on a couple of things. He's correct in saying that in the elementary section of education class size is important. But the article did, without really mentioning Canada directly, go on to say that the highest-scoring countries in the world have higher class sizes, so that in the secondary level perhaps it could be examined. I'm not saying our system is completely wrong, but to clarify the record.

Also, currently there's been a lot of discussion about health care costs in not only Canada and Ontario but indeed other provinces. We're late in the game on restructuring health care; that's widely understood. I will quote an article from the Toronto Sun, dated April 20. It's the editorial. I think it states very clearly in those two areas —

Mr Pouliot: Save me the business section.

Mr O'Toole: I didn't write it, so if you want to listen, I'll give it to you. It says that Ontario "spends \$1 billion

more on education than if it was spending at the same level as the national average." There's an editor of a paper making a statement and says that we spend more than the national average. Furthermore, on health care, it says that we spend "more on health care per person than every other province save for BC."

I think the opposition should listen, and they should certainly respond with some degree of accuracy for the people watching at home.

Our region of Durham spends less per capita than many parts of the province, and my constituents want their fair share.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

1730

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): It's a pleasure and quite an honour to comment on the excellent presentation my colleague the member for Renfrew North made. It's not surprising at all. This eloquence comes from knowledge and understanding of Ontario and of the policy itself.

I recall months ago that the same member warned us in caucus that the issue that is going to affect us most, by the way this government has acted, is health care, and the way he spoke today tells me that if the government for a short moment would just listen carefully — it's such a good idea that we have Hansard today, that not only can we read it but can have a replay of the legislative procedures and see and hear his speech again, because if there is anybody within this Legislature who understands this province well and understands the people and the communities, it is this member for Renfrew North.

One of the main issues I hear from this member is about those who are vulnerable in our society, and our seniors and the way they have been treated through our health care. You should stand up and take some notice of what's happening. It's not only happening in Brantford or Prescott or wherever we are in Ontario, but it's all over. In Scarborough itself many of the seniors are calling and are expressing the same concerns I am hearing this honourable member mention today. While we may stand up and try to correct certain things in the *Economist* or in the *Sun*, listen to what's happening in Ontario. Listen and watch what you're doing with regard to your policies to some of the most vulnerable in our society, our seniors. I warn those members to take heed.

Mrs Boyd: I would like to congratulate the member for Renfrew North on his usual very eloquent presentation of concerns. He has shown us, through the kinds of examples he brought, exactly how the kinds of concerns others have raised more generally come home to individuals and to families in this province.

I must admit I was shocked to see yet again another demonstration of the cavalier attitude of the Tory members, when he described the very serious and tragic circumstances of a senior in a hospital in the eastern Ontario area, for the member for Etobicoke-Humber to comment, "Well, seniors die every week." Seniors do die every week, premature babies die every week, accident victims die every week and injured workers die every week. That does not mean it is not the responsibility of the government in charge at any given moment to do

everything it can, through its policies and its funding, to try and prevent that kind of unnecessary waste and tragedy.

It is exactly that issue we are trying to bring to the fore. Every time one of the members of the opposition parties brings up an example, it is dismissed by the members of the government. The reality is there are hundreds of examples of how people are suffering in this province from the kinds of cuts this government has made to health care, and those people who have suffered that kind of tragedy are offended by the attitude of the government when they try to dismiss those concerns as not being very valid. It will eventually come home to roost when this government cavalierly dismisses the kinds of tragic examples opposition members bring forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew North, you have two minutes.

Mr Conway: I want to thank my colleagues for their several observations. Just two quick points in response: The member for Sudbury East made a comment about reinvestment and I want to make a quick response to that. I think it has to be understood that what we're seeing in Ontario is a commitment by the Rae government and now the Harris government, over about a nine-year period, to spend about \$17.5 billion on health care. I won't get into the debate today as to what qualifies as a health expenditure, because that's changing somewhat. But if you spend \$17.5 billion annually for nine years, with no allowance for inflation and demographic change, there's no doubt about what is the purchasing power of that \$17.5 billion or \$17.7 billion. That's, in real terms, a cut because of inflation and demographic change.

The other aspect of reinvestment becomes important, and let me say it very bluntly: In Pembroke, we're losing at least \$10 million of our hospital budget. The bulk of that is going to be reinvested in 905. It's not going to be reinvested in Pembroke. It's going to be reinvested in Whitby and in North Halton and in Newmarket and Aurora, and I dare say so will the bulk of the savings from Cornwall and Sudbury and the Niagara Peninsula and southwestern Ontario. The bulk of the savings is going to be reinvested in the 905 belt. So if you notice something is happening in your neighbourhood — the minister is right when he says we're reinvesting, but we're not necessarily reinvesting what we take out of Sudbury or Pembroke or Cornwall or Grimsby in your community.

Finally, with the presence of my friends the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Energy, I beg you on behalf of my colleagues Cleary and Gerretsen about the eastern Ontario kidney situation. The legal action around the Posen case is causing real hardship to kidney dialysis patients from Renfrew to Cornwall to Kingston to Bancroft. Please do something to alleviate that real human need.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I would have been very disappointed if I wasn't able to take part in this supply debate today.

I think the member for Durham Centre was expressing some concern about the civil servants of the province not

getting paid as this debate goes on today and tomorrow and whenever. I would just remind members opposite who may not know what happened that in order for this motion to have been debated last Thursday, which I gather was the original intent of the government, the government had to get the notice in by Wednesday at 5 pm, I believe. The government failed to do that. The opposition did not prevent them from doing that.

Then the opposition said to the government: "Look, we understand. We'll give you unanimous consent to do it on Thursday anyway, even though you goofed." And the government said, "Oh, no, not unless you will guarantee only one day's debate." What kind of deal is that? You had the opportunity to have the debate start on Thursday and continue this week. "Oh, no," the government says, "We will not do it that way. We will debate it on Monday and Tuesday."

Hon Mr Sterling: It would have been a good deal for us.

Mr Laughren: Yes, it would have been a good deal for you, but you blew it. Let's understand that.

My memory doesn't always serve me well any more, but I can recall — I believe it was that party that held up supply right to the end of the month; not a couple of days before but to the end of the month and the beginning of the next month.

I would just remind members that you could have avoided this whole scene if you had simply done your homework, had done your job in the first place, and second, had agreed to a deal for unanimous consent for last Thursday. But you chose not to.

I'm not encouraging civil servants to spend their time watching the legislative channel, but if any of them are, I would just remind you out there that it was the Tories who blew this, not the opposition. That's who did it.

I do think there has to be an understanding of how this place works. I wasn't going to clarify it until I heard the member for Durham Centre running around babbling that the opposition was going to stop people from getting paid. Nothing could be further from the truth, if I could put it so delicately.

I want to talk about three or four issues. You have to understand that we live in times that are quite polarized in Ontario. I'm not really complaining about that. It keeps the political adrenalin moving when you have a polarized political situation. I think most of you would agree. I think when we were in office it was somewhat polarized as well, so I'm not complaining about it being polarized. I'm simply saying that it is polarized, and when that's the case, you must expect prolonged and spirited debate on supply motions. You've simply got to expect that. You must understand it. If you're going to call supply, which you have to do, then do it in time to get the debate finished before the end of the month. You cannot fall back on incompetence forever. At some point, you've got to be held accountable for getting the business of this House through. You were incompetent on the filibuster debate as well. You are incompetent on this debate too.

1740

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I wasn't.

Mr Laughren: During the filibuster debate, the member for Perth, Mr Johnson, was not incompetent. I

thought Mr Johnson did a good job during the filibuster debate. I'm not being unfair to members opposite.

I wanted to talk about a couple of issues. One of them is the whole issue of privatization. I must say that when I was watching — I wasn't able to be here yesterday for the minister for privatization's framework, his long-delayed framework. I wasn't able to be here for that, and perhaps it's just as well, because I'm not sure my heart could have stood it. I'm not sure I could have handled the drama of Mr Sampson getting to his feet and announcing this sweeping privatization framework which says they're going to privatize a couple of tree nurseries and Ortech. Was there anything else on that list?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

Mr Laughren: And the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

You talk about the pillars of public institution this province that are now going to be in the private sector. That's them, isn't it? Is that them? Is that what your friends on Bay Street have been salivating over? I understand that not just Bay Street but other business streets around the world have been sitting on the edge of their seats waiting for this privatization announcement so they could get their hands on those public institutions long ago paid for by the public in this province. That's what they've been waiting for.

When Mr Sampson stood, I must say, I was trembling all over in anticipation, and it isn't often any more than I tremble in anticipation. But I was trembling in anticipation as to what Mr Sampson was going to say, and what he said was: "Don't worry, folks, we're backing down. All you Bay Street folks, back off. We're not going to do it."

I was very happy, because maybe there's some common sense settling in for the first time since you formed the government. You can't do it. You're not going to do it. Go back and tell your friends that you're not going to privatize, that it's off the agenda: Forget about TVO, forget about the LCBO, forget about Ontario Hydro. Those are the pillars of public institution in this province that people wanted to get their hands on, but it's not going to happen, is it? It's not going to happen.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: And you're disappointed.

Mr Laughren: I don't know why the Minister of Agriculture keeps saying I'm disappointed. I've said clearly that the whole idea —

Ms Martel: It's takes a while.

Mr Laughren: Yes, I'll try and get through to the member. He's so preoccupied with the possibility of the ending of public funding for separate schools that he can't concentrate on other issues, I guess. But I can tell the member that it's not that I'm disappointed, it's that I'm relieved that the privatization minister has come to this conclusion.

What I worry about is what in the world is Mr Currie, who is Mr Sampson's EA — he earns three times as much Mr Sampson, \$245,000 a year, but he's his EA — going to do now? If I was Mr Currie, I'd be either outraged or laughing all the way to the bank, but for sure I'd be shopping around my résumé, because there's

nothing for Mr Currie to do now. What's he going to do? Count trees in those few nurseries remaining? I have no idea. I think there has to be a reckoning here. I hope Mr Currie's got a severance package built into his contract with Mr Sampson because he's got nothing to do. Why did you go out and pay this man — I think he's a competent fellow, a virtual whiz kid. He's even younger than I am. Why would you pay Mr Currie 245,000 big ones to worry about privatizing a few remaining tree nurseries in the province and Ortech and the Province of Ontario Savings Office?

Mr Gilchrist: He could study the nationalizing of Inco.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough East.

Mr Laughren: I think it's a weird thing you've done. What does Mr Currie have on you folks? I hope it's not on Mr Sampson he's got anything.

I would simply say that I am pleased they're not proceeding, although I have a nagging concern about the water and sewage systems in this province because of Bill 107. It's a bill that's going into clause-by-clause debate tomorrow afternoon — that's unless the Tories screw up the scheduling again. Tomorrow afternoon there's going to be a clause-by-clause debate on Bill 107, and that bill transfers the remaining 25% of sewer and water systems to municipalities. Whether they want them or not, quite frankly, they're going to get them.

Then, of course, in tandem with that transfer is the downloading — and I'll speak about that in a little while — that's going to occur and put enormous pressure on the municipalities to find new revenues, such as the sale of their sewer and water facilities. I'm very unhappy about that. It would not be the government privatizing per se; it would be the municipalities privatizing because of the enormous fiscal pressures put on them by this government in its downloading. There's no doubt about that.

I found the Minister of the Environment's comments — and I'll use this word advisedly, Mr Speaker, and I hope you won't rule it out of order — disingenuous. What he more or less said was he would be disappointed — I'll paraphrase, and if I'm wrong, I hope the Minister of Environment will rise to his feet and correct me. What he more or less said was he would be disappointed if municipalities sold the sewer and water facilities when they took over ownership. He more or less said that. This is in London, Ontario.

I thought, boy, that is disingenuous when you transfer it to the municipalities, really, really tighten the screws financially on those municipalities, and then throw up your hands and say, "Gee, I hope they don't privatize those services." That really is less than forthright, and it's not like this Minister of Environment to be less than forthright. It's not like him to do that, and that's why I was disappointed in his comments.

I am not pleased with the philosophy and the attitude towards — I'm sorry, I can't read what the member across the way is trying to show me — I'm not pleased with any aspects of privatization, but at the same time it really was —

Hon Mr Sterling: How about nationalization?

Mr Laughren: That's different. Now you've got my adrenalin going again. Talk about nationalization, and I

want to be at the table. If it's privatization, I don't want to be.

Yes, as a matter of fact, it's a well-known fact that for years and years and years, I wanted to nationalize Inco and call it the People's International Nickel Co, or Pinco for short. That's right.

Mr Conway: Like Tony Blair, you had a conversion.

Mr Laughren: I hope it's not as complete a conversion as Tony Blair has had.

I'd like to speak a few minutes on the whole issue of transfers from the federal government to the province. I can recall when we were in government and we were getting hammered in transfers from the federal government to the province, started by Mulroney, continued by the Chrétien government. When I would complain about it and we were fighting for what we called a fair share for Ontario, guess what Mike Harris, who was then the leader of the third party and the member for Nipissing, said, and he said it over and over again: "Stop whining. You don't have a revenue problem. You've got an expenditure problem." That's what Mr Harris said in opposition.

What did Mr Harris say yesterday? He said that the federal government was not treating Ontario fairly, because they owed us more in transfer payments. Wait a minute. There's something wrong with that picture. Surely Mr Harris isn't saying something different now than he said when he was leader of the third party. That's what he said. He said there was no revenue problem: "Stop whining about what the feds are doing to you. You've only got an expenditure problem." Does he still feel that way?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: He does.

Mr Laughren: He does? Well, I guess Mr Harris must not feel that he's got a revenue problem — I suppose you could put it that way — since he's borrowing money to pay for the tax cut, about \$5 billion a year.

1750

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Come on.

Mr Laughren: The cut will come to \$5 billion when it's fully matured.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You just said a year.

Mr Laughren: That will be the cost to the treasury of this province, about \$5 billion.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Not a year.

Mr Laughren: What's 30% of \$13 billion? Go and figure it out. Between \$4 billion and \$5 billion.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Your math is not very good, Floyd. You have been out of school.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for S-D-G & East Grenville.

Mr Laughren: There's a long history here of this government's comments in opposition and what they now have decided is important to them.

I want to spend a couple of minutes on the whole issue of downloading to the municipalities. A lot of people have talked about it and I'll try not to repeat a lot of the comments, but I think at the end of the day that is going to be this government's Achilles's heel, because you cannot do what you said you're going to do. I'll tell you why.

You look at the regional municipality of Sudbury. It's a working-class community. The average property taxes

are I think somewhere between \$1,500 and \$2,000 a year. I myself live rurally so I have my own septic system and my own water system. It's a very good system; I've become quite attached to my septic bed, as a matter of fact. I must say I've been very happy with it. But if the average property taxes — I'll even take the low figure, \$1,500 a year, which is low; the average is probably higher than that. But if the downloading occurs —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: How much is education there?

The Deputy Speaker: The member for S-D-G & East Grenville.

Mr Laughren: I'll get to that. I'm going to give you the numbers. Don't worry. I know the Minister of Agriculture is worried about separate school funding; that's why he raises education again. Let me tell you that if the average property tax is \$1,500, with the downloading that's already been announced by this government, including eliminating education from property taxes, this is what would happen: The following health and social services will be downloaded to the regional municipality of Sudbury, totalling \$115.2 million. If you want, I can give you a breakdown of all of those numbers, how you arrive at that number. Other services, such as highways being transferred and library grants ending and loss of transit grants and so forth, come to another \$6.8 million. The municipal support grants, gone; that comes to \$36.9 million. If you add up all the combination of downloading and end of grants, it comes to \$158.9 million. These are yearly figures.

I'm pleased the Minister of Agriculture said, "What is the cost of education?" I know he worried about this. The educational levy — we're talking about the residential — is \$53.5 million. The amount of downloading is \$158.9 million. The educational levy, which will be removed from the property taxes, comes to \$53.5 million. That leaves a net figure of \$105.4 million being downloaded to the regional municipality of Sudbury.

These are numbers from the regional municipality of Sudbury; they are not my numbers, because I know some of you would suspect my numbers. What that means is you spread the net impact of \$105 million over the residential levy across the regional municipality of Sudbury and guess what it comes to for each property taxpayer in the regional municipality of Sudbury? It comes to \$1,500, basically doubling the property taxes in the regional municipality of Sudbury.

Is there anyone, of the backbenchers over there, who is prepared to get up on their hind legs and say today that they would allow property taxes to double in any municipality? I don't think you would tolerate your property taxes in your municipalities, in your ridings, doubling as a result of your downloading. I don't believe you'd tolerate that for a minute. Yet if the government does what it says it's going to do, that will be the impact in the regional municipality of Sudbury. I don't think you can tolerate that; I don't think the system can handle it. You're going to have to back down on this one too. Maybe you'd better put Rob Sampson in charge of downloading — he'll find a way to back down on it — because you can't do this.

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: You can talk about anything else you want, any other policies, you can make fun of everything

our government did when we were in office. That's fine. What I'm telling you is that you cannot double property taxes in a municipality. You cannot do it.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): But you tried, eh?

Mr Laughren: No, we didn't try, and you will not do it, so you'd better start talking to those people in the front benches, say, "What are you doing?" You're going to double property taxes in Sudbury. Don't take my word for it. Phone up the treasurer of the regional municipality of Sudbury and say, "Is the member for Nickel Belt talking facts from your region when he raises these numbers?" Phone them up and ask them. Ask the treasurer in your own municipalities what's going to be the result of the downloading. See what they tell you. See how long you sit there and just take it.

There may be some municipalities that are high in assessment that will not have this same impact, but I'll tell you, these are real numbers from a real municipality, the regional municipality of Sudbury.

You may not like to hear it, but that's exactly what's going to happen. I can't imagine what the result would be if you decided you were going to brazen it out and simply go ahead and proceed with the downloading. I can't imagine the social unrest, and quite frankly I think there would be civil disobedience, if that was to occur. I really believe that. There would be civil disobedience.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Put John Sewell in charge.

Mr Laughren: It doesn't matter who's in charge. If you double people's property taxes, you're not going to be able to handle it.

You're going to have to talk to your people. You're going to have to talk to those whiz kids around the Premier and say: "You know, you guys are wrong. You can't pull this off." That's why negotiations with AMO are so difficult. AMO knows what's going on. They're not going to put up with this. I think they've given you a lot of slack. They've cut you more slack than I would have cut you on this issue if I'd been a member of AMO. They've been quite generous to you. They're letting you try and work it out, to work out another arrangement. But that will only go on so long.

Mr Baird: Just like you, they're trying to help.

Mr Laughren: They're trying to be helpful, that's correct. I can tell you, we in government talked about disentanglement. We were going to rationalize the system as well. We tried very hard to make that happen. At the end of the day, it didn't happen. There's a very good reason why it didn't happen, but it didn't happen. But we were not engaged in a downloading exercise. We were engaged in rationalizing and disentangling the delivery of services and there was no downloading —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You did a hell of a job.

Mr Laughren: Go and talk to AMO. They'll tell you there was no downloading as part of our disentanglement exercise — none. We simply wanted to rationalize the delivery of services. There was none.

Mr Baird: It didn't work.

Mr Laughren: It didn't work, and I'll be quite honest with you about why it didn't work: On the eve of concluding it, we brought in the social contract and that threw everything into a cocked hat and it didn't work. That's exactly what happened. It had nothing to do with

downloading. Don't take my word for it; go and talk to the people at AMO and they'll tell you that's what happened. It had nothing to do with disentanglement.

You people couldn't be satisfied. You had to engage not just in disentanglement but massive downloading. I really find it strange that the people who have fallen out of favour with the Premier's office are those people who are smart enough to see that the tax cut didn't make sense if you're going to continue to — I support the deficit reduction exercise, but if you are going to do that as well as cut income taxes by 30%, you can't pull it off without massive downloading. There's no other way to do it. How else can you do it? You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see through that.

The people who spoke out opposed to that — as a matter of fact, I'm not sure if any of them are in the assembly today, but I can tell you they were right. But you folks and the people around the Premier were just too smart. You thought you could do it all. You thought you could reduce income taxes by that amount, you thought you could reduce the deficit, and the money would pour in because of the income tax reduction.

Mr Baird: It is.

Mr Laughren: Well, the world isn't quite that simple. Then why are you doing the downloading? If the money is pouring in like you say it is, why are you engaged in this massive downloading? Why are you doubling the property taxes for the people in the regional municipality of Sudbury? You say you're not? Fine. You call the regional municipality —

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Laughren: I'm being interrupted.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Riverdale has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning a report from the Environmental Commissioner. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the member for Northumberland has up to five minutes to reply.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I appreciate this opportunity to finish some sentences for the Premier in response to questions asked by my leader, Howard Hampton, and myself on April 22 about this devastating report to the Legislature from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. The Premier was so desperately looking for compliments in the report that he kept reading half sentences, which I would say most respectfully was an attempt to give people listening a wrong and distorted view of the contents of this report.

For instance, the Premier quotes from page 14 of the report, and if you have the report you can follow me on this. It says: "The Environmental Registry has been tested...and proven as a cost-effective way to open the door to the government's...decision-making," but what he

left out is this, "if the ministries use it properly." That's the part of the sentence he left out.

Then if you turn to pages 30 and 31 of the report, guess what you find? A big heading "Decision-Making Issues Across Ministries," then "Decisions Not Posted On The Registry," and it says, "Too many decisions were not posted on the Environmental Registry, closing the door to environmental decision-making," and on it goes. That's one sentence, but a very important and telling part was left out.

Then later he quotes from page 6, and this is the quote: "The Ministry of Environment and Energy was the most consistently proactive in opening the door to its environmental decision-making processes." He stops there but the sentence goes on. This is what he leaves out: "However, Responsive Environmental Protection, the ministry's public consultation paper on regulatory reform, showed that a sweeping review of every ministry environmental regulation is happening too quickly and is too narrowly focused." That's the part of the sentence that Mr Harris, our Premier, left out, and this did indeed leave a different impression of this report — really a devastating report.

If I were the government, if I were the Premier — I hope the parliamentary assistant today finally does this, will stand up and say, "There's a lot of criticism in this report and we intend to fix it." They have heard now several times from this commissioner but never have they received a report this devastating. I believe it's unprecedented.

They received two special reports from this commissioner to this Legislature over the last two years expressing deep concern about the way this government was going in terms of deregulation and cutting. The International Joint Commission, the auditor and CELA even made comments. There has been a whole series of reports by experts from various levels in the environmental field or from other fields who understand that what the government is doing with the environmental deregulation and cutting is indeed very, very serious.

I'm sure the parliamentary assistant, who is going to respond, is going to come out with the same drivel we hear day after day in this House from the minister and others about: "We're not deregulating, we're reregulating. We're doing more with less." When you have the Environmental Commissioner of this province coming out with a report like this, and the news release that came with it which says, "Hasty cutbacks, many of which were made behind closed doors, and a lack of environmental vision marked ministries' agenda in 1996, says Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Eva Ligeti, in her 1996 annual report.

"Throughout 1996, the ministries demonstrated an alarming lack of environmental vision.... Instead, says her report, their activities were characterized by omnibus-style legislation, cuts to environmental programs and the shift of environmental responsibilities to municipalities and the private sector.

"Perhaps the most significant decisions made in 1996 were those that reduced the ministries' responsibility to protect the environment," said Commissioner Ligeti. "The extent and pace of change were daunting. Given the

enormous implications of these decisions, it is disturbing that many were made with the absolute minimum amount of public consultation and in some cases, not at all.”

I would submit to this government that they should finally start paying attention to the Environmental Commissioner and start making amends immediately.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd like to relate to the member for Riverdale that this government has done more for environmental protection in the first year and a half than the previous two governments did in their 10-year term in government.

The ministry continues to operate in full compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights. In many instances, the ministry provides services beyond those required by the act.

This ministry believes in results. That is why we're focusing more on the end product rather than on the process, as was previously happening. We are looking beyond traditional methods to achieve improvements on our environmental activities. By working smarter and more efficiently, we will accomplish more at less cost.

This ministry may be moving fast, but at least we are moving forward, moving forward to enhance environmental protection and promoting conservation for Ontarians. The people of this province continue to demand the highest standard of environmental protection, and we will continue to provide these services.

One of the ministry's top priorities is to set and enforce strong, clear standards, which include those set for drinking water. The member has made statements regarding ensuring the quality of drinking water for the citizens of Ontario. She has also been critical of what she calls offloading of testing of drinking water to municipalities. As the member knows, it has always been the responsibility of municipalities to establish a monitoring program which will ensure the provision of safe drinking water.

As a former minister, the member is also well aware that the decision was made in 1993 by her government to charge municipalities commercially competitive rates for test services. In fact, many municipalities have been using their own labs for many years. Lab testing services for about half the water and sewage treatment plants in the province were already being provided by private sector or municipal labs before the ministry announced its intention to discontinue test services. The ministry provides a comprehensive audit of drinking water quality through tests performed on routine samples for the drinking water surveillance program. This government remains committed to ensuring that the citizens of Ontario have safe, clean drinking water.

The member opposite also asserted that cuts to the ministry's budget are having an impact on our ability to

enforce regulations. We are focusing on environmentally significant activities that enhance protection and produce real benefits. Unlike previous governments, we do not have the option to disregard fiscal accountability to the taxpayer, so we have to ensure that we get optimal environmental return for each dollar that is being spent at the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

We have many accomplishments. The ministry has embarked on a comprehensive regulatory review, one that has been open and extensive right from the start. The commissioner herself complimented the ministry on its consultation, saying, “The ministry's regulatory reform initiative is an example of how to use the environmental registry effectively.” The ministry is committed to ongoing consultation. We will continue to seek broad public input on changes to regulations. It has been very extensive — you'll have to admit that — over the past year and a half.

Let me clarify for the member: We are not deregulating. We are examining ways of improving our regulatory system to ensure continued and enhanced environmental protection, and there are many, many examples that could be used.

The minister has also developed a three-year plan for updating some 200 out-of-date standards which, I'd to point out, the member for Riverdale did nothing to address.

The minister is also tackling the issue of cross-boundary pollution, which again your previous government failed to address. Last week the Minister of Environment and Energy met with representatives of 11 US states to establish a firm working connection to ensure cleaner air and water for the people of Ontario. I'd ask, what ministers went to visit US states in the previous government?

In addition, the ministry is developing a comprehensive smog plan aimed at reducing emissions of pollutants which cause smog. We're examining options for a vehicle emission testing program. In fact, the minister has been to Georgia to see at first hand how the system works in that jurisdiction, operated by a Canadian. We hope to be coming forward very soon with a program. Where was your government on this important initiative?

This government welcomes the scrutiny of both the public auditor and the Environmental Commissioner. We seek the feedback they provide as means of always striving to improve the way the environment and energy ministry works.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no further matter to be debated, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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Mercredi 30 avril 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 April 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 avril 1997

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): On December 6, 1996, the Minister of Labour, Elizabeth Witmer, signed a new agreement with the province of Quebec to allow better access to the Quebec market for construction workers and contractors. Earlier this year, Premier Mike Harris endorsed this agreement with Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard.

Unfortunately, another construction season is upon us and still the Ontario construction workers and contractors are in the dark. They have not been well informed of the different dispositions of this new agreement.

The Ministry of Labour was to produce a booklet called the Guide to the Ontario-Quebec Agreement on Labour Mobility and Recognition of Qualifications, Skills and Work Experience in the Construction Industry. This booklet was supposed to be released January 31 of this year. We were told it would be ready February 15. It is now early May and we have yet to see this very important piece of information, and our construction people are not taking advantage of the December 6 agreement because they are still waiting for this user-friendly guide.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Just a couple of weeks ago I was out on the road across Ontario hearing from people about Bill 109, the act to change irrevocably forever the way we deliver library service in this province. We heard some wonderful presentations by all kinds of folks who love libraries.

One of them in particular I wanted to put on the record here today because I think it's interesting. It's a list of books that Moses Sheppard, a representative for the United Steelworkers, said Mike Harris should have to read. It's a top 10 list and it goes like this:

"(10) How to Listen; (9) How to Win Friends and Influence People; (8) One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; (7) To Kill a Mockingbird; (6) Inherit the Wind; (5) Foxfire — I understand some of you want to ban Foxfire; shades of Peterborough. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

"(4) Fiscal Crisis of the State; (3) Fair Taxation in a Changing World; (2) The Moral Basis of a Backward — or a bankrupt — Society, and finally, Robin Hood, and we've combined Robin Hood with the King James version of the Bible because, in many ways, they say the

same things. They talk about taking from the rich and giving to the poor. The Bible supports that. And while some of you may not have heard of Robin Hood, we thought you might have at least heard of the Holy Bible."

CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize that April is Cancer Awareness Month and to commend the thousands of volunteers who have been out in each of our communities knocking on doors and organizing special events to raise money and raise awareness in the fight against this horrible disease.

Cancer affects tens of thousands of Ontarians every year and one in three Canadians will develop some form of cancer during his or her lifetime.

Yesterday Premier Harris and Health Minister Jim Wilson announced a \$16.5-million reinvestment for cancer care in this province and announced the creation of Cancer Care Ontario. This reinvestment will provide more services for 24,000 patients in Ontario, including those who need expensive new anti-cancer drugs, children with cancer and women at risk for cervical cancer. In addition, the creation of Cancer Care Ontario will ensure that cancer patient services across Ontario are integrated and coordinated so that patients receive the best possible service.

Our government is making significant reinvestments in cancer care and in direct patient services so patients can get the care they need, where they need it and when they need it. Our government is putting the patient first.

This announcement is part of our government's continuing commitment to reinvest and to drive health care dollars to front-line services that most benefit Ontarians. Restructuring our health care system means that more money currently tied up in administration, duplication and overlap will be reinvested in hospitals and front-line services for patients.

I would ask the members of the House to join me today in commending the thousands of Ontarians who have volunteered their time and energy this month to help in the fight against cancer.

HOSPITAL BEDS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My statement is to the Minister of Health. I would like to bring to your attention a situation that occurred with a constituent named Edward Stan. On March 20, Mr Stan suffered a heart attack while vacationing in Florida. He was admitted to Orange Park Hospital and was later transferred to a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida on March 26. Among other procedures, Mr Stan, a retired senior, has had open

heart surgery, a tracheotomy and has received dialysis for a failed kidney while in Florida.

Now stabilized, Mr Stan could be transferred Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor. Dr Craig R. Pearce, a cardiovascular specialist, is prepared to care for Mr Stan. The problem is Hotel-Dieu Grace cannot receive him because there's not an available bed in the ICU. Although the hospital has confirmed with me they are working on the problem and they are hopeful Mr Stan may be transported and admitted within the next day or two, the fact is Mr Stan's medical costs have now far exceeded any amount he will be able to pay, primarily because there were no available beds.

Minister, it's inexcusable and intolerable that Mr Stan cannot be admitted to an Ontario hospital because there are no beds. It's clear that your cuts have directly affected patient care. I ask the minister to intervene in order that Mr Stan's medical costs will be covered by the province, since it's abundantly clear that your cuts to our health care system have precipitated this situation.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): On Monday, April 28, the minister of privatization, Rob Sampson, rose in this place to present his government's long-delayed privatization framework. Bay Street entrepreneurs and indeed corporations around the world watched in eager anticipation. This was their kind of guy, representing their kind of government. Finally the private sector would get their hands on assets already paid for by Ontario's long-suffering taxpayers. Visions of public sector institutions danced in their heads: Ontario Hydro, the LCBO, TVOntario.

Can you imagine the gnashing of teeth, the roars of outrage, the sense of betrayal among those people who thought the Tories were going to hand them, at bargain basement prices, some of our finest public institutions?

I and my colleagues are pleased that Mr Sampson and his \$245,000-a-year executive assistant have collapsed. They are in full retreat. They have blinked.

This is what Mr Sampson has offered his ideological brothers on Bay Street and elsewhere: Ortech, a research agency; a few tree nurseries; the convention centre; and the Province of Ontario Savings Office. That's right; not LCBO, not Ontario Hydro, not TVO.

Oh, Mr Speaker, the shame of it all. Mr Sampson, you must either demand a return to the back bench or a promotion to cabinet. Don't demean yourself any further.

1340

PETERBOROUGH ECONOMY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise to inform all members of this assembly about a manufacturer in my riding that recently launched another product packaging innovation. In Canada the Minute Maid company is based in Willowdale and employs 150 people with a frozen juice manufacturing operation in Peterborough. The plant recently launched the new easy-peel ring on its line of frozen juices and drinks, making it easier for consumers to use the product. This new product line is the result of two years of research and development by Mississauga-based Sonoco Containers.

The facility in Peterborough is a model operation. Since it opened in 1985, production has quadrupled, employment tripled, and the variety of products manufactured has increased tenfold, all positive signs of growth. The plant is unionized under the United Food and Commercial Workers and enjoys excellent labour relations. The Peterborough operation is recognized within the Minute Maid company among the top plants for safety, environmental compliance, productivity, product quality and innovation.

Let me congratulate the Minute Maid company and the local workers for their innovation and hard work. Their contribution to the community of Peterborough has been positive, rewarding and beneficial for everyone involved.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): For well over a year I have witnessed the government's heavy-handed and dictatorial approach to the restructuring process in Ontario. I'm deeply opposed to the government's unilateral decisions to force amalgamations on municipalities, school boards and hospitals. The Premier's plan to dump the whole gamut of social service costs on to property taxpayers is nothing short of a disaster.

Now Kent county has fallen under the axe. The government's process for restructuring in Kent is no better than the disastrous process used in Metro Toronto. The Mike Harris plan is fundamentally flawed. The Harris government has forced restructuring on to municipalities without adequate information, based on one-sided arguments and unproven speculations. In Kent the process has been driven at breakneck speed, forcing a wedge into local government and creating incredible stress and divisions within our communities. It is feared that 500 jobs will be lost and with them the responsiveness to local needs.

Both rural and urban centres feel they have lost their democratic voice. The die is cast. There is no choice left for the 23 municipalities of Kent. But rest assured the people of Chatham-Kent will have a voice about Mike Harris when the next provincial election is called.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): In 1996 this Conservative government removed the requirement that 2.25 hours of hands-on care per day be provided to residents in long-term-care facilities. Residents, families and health care providers in homes for the aged and nursing homes know that removing this guaranteed level of care has resulted in a deterioration of the quality of care and life for those living in long-term-care facilities.

In Sudbury health care workers have brought attention to this serious problem in a special way. CUPE Locals 3607, 1182, 2219 and 148 organized A Penny for Your Thoughts campaign — 2,889 workers, residents, families and friends each donated one penny to send a message to Mike Harris: Rethink your thoughts around long-term-care funding and levels of care in our institutions.

Each person who donated a penny believes this is a shameful situation and wants the 2.25 hours of care reinstituted immediately. They also believe Mike Harris

should spend 24 hours at a long-term-care facility to witness at first hand how his cuts are affecting seniors and those who are developmentally challenged.

On behalf of CUPE workers at our area institutions, the member for Nickel Belt and I present these 2,889 pennies to the Premier. We believe he must rethink his thoughts on mandated levels of care. Mike Harris must spend a day at a nursing home or home for the aged so he can know about the impact of his cuts. He might then understand that our seniors deserve better.

MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and announce that once again the riding of Perth is to be the focus for change in Ontario.

Today is the first day of the 44th annual meeting of the Ontario small urban municipalities section of AMO. The conference is being held at the Victorian Inn on the Park in Stratford from April 30 to May 3 and is being hosted by His Worship Mayor David Hunt of the city of Stratford.

During these times of change, it's important for everyone to work together to ensure a prosperous future for Ontario. This conference gives small urban municipal leaders from across Ontario the opportunity to have input into the issues which concern them most.

This year's conference will include discussions on urban-rural restructuring, economic impact of hospital restructuring in rural Ontario, changes to the provision of services within municipalities and the new Municipal Act.

There is no doubt that there is need for change in Ontario and that municipal governments are a big part of the solution. Municipalities provide strong and effective leadership and are a vital and essential component of government.

It's a great honour for the city of Stratford to be hosting this conference where so much of the future of Ontario municipalities will be discussed. As a matter of fact, this is the second year in a row that Stratford has received this distinction. In itself, this is quite an achievement, and it shows that whether it's in municipal governance, manufacturing or agriculture, the riding of Perth is number one when it comes to setting an example for the rest of Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You know, I think I have a point of privilege; I also have a ruling. Can I do it after ministry statements and before question period? Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I rise to announce that today our government intends to introduce nurse practitioner legislation to remove the red tape, making it easier for nurse practitioners to deliver services to patients.

The Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act will improve access to primary care services across the province and means that, if the legislation is passed by this House, more patients in Ontario will soon be able to receive more health care services from nurse practitioners.

We know that these are difficult times for nurses and other health care providers. The goal of restructuring, however, is not to save dollars; it is to redirect resources to front-line patient care. For example, we are making reinvestments to create opportunities for nurses to provide care to people in various settings. Our recent announcements of funding for the healthy babies program will create new jobs for public health nurses, and reinvestments in long-term care and hospital-based priority programs will create hundreds of new nursing positions.

We know from experience in other jurisdictions such as Britain and Australia that once restructuring is complete there will be even more opportunities for nurses.

Today's initiative is just one example and just one part of our vision for health care reform. Once passed, the Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act will legally recognize nurse practitioners and will enable them to practise to their full potential within a multidisciplinary health team. Nurses play a valuable role in our health care system, and this legislation recognizes their contribution in providing care to patients.

This legislation amends the Nursing Act and other related acts and sets out regulations that allow nurse practitioners to communicate a diagnosis of common disorders or diseases, prescribe and administer certain treatments and certain medications, order certain ultrasounds and basic X-rays and order basic lab tests.

There are already more than 200 nurse practitioners working throughout the province in communities such as Ottawa, Hamilton, West Lorne, Cambridge and Lanark, to name just a few. Until now, they have had to get a physician's written approval before proceeding with treatment decisions. Today's announcement and the passage of the legislation will help remove the red tape and end the paper-chase. It will promote physicians and nurses working together to deliver quality care to patients.

For example, Linda Jones, a nurse practitioner working in a multidisciplinary team in the southeast Ottawa community health centre, told us that she has a 300-page protocol manual to legally support her current practice. We want to take the time that doctors and nurses put into this kind of paperwork and put it into providing services to patients. The ministry has received more than 900 letters of support for this initiative from nurses and physicians over the past two years alone.

Prior to introducing this legislation, the ministry, under the previous government, conducted numerous consultations, and those consultations continued over the last two years. Health experts and analysts agree that nurse practitioners will complement and enhance our health care system and will mean better all-round care for patients. Research done in Canada and in the US supports those views as well.

1350

Today's initiative will help create jobs for the 30 nurse practitioners who graduated from Ontario's post-degree

university certificate program last year and the 96 more nurses expected to graduate next September. It also means that primary health care centres, clinics and emergency departments of hospitals will be able to take advantage of the skills of nurse practitioners. Patients will benefit from more comprehensive health care.

Our legislation also addresses the need for additional health care providers in northern and rural underserved communities. Physicians have told us that they need professional support in these communities. Nurse practitioners will be able to provide that support.

We believe our actions will lead to better collaboration between nurse practitioners, family physicians and other health providers, which means better all-round care and enhanced services for more patients. This will support our government's vision for quality health care in Ontario, providing the right care in the right place at the right time.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize some of the many nurses who have supported the introduction of this legislation. Present in the members' gallery today are Dr Charlotte Noesgaard, president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Ms Carol Sargo, president of the Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario; Ms Barb Wahl, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association; Ms Lynne Purvis, nursing practice adviser from the College of Nurses of Ontario; and Dr Alan Hudson, CEO of the Toronto Hospital.

I would be remiss if I did not also recognize Dr Dorothy Hall, the distinguished nurse who began this initiative, and Ms Cheri Vigar, the president of the College of Nurses.

Nurses provide top-quality care to tens of thousands of people each and every day in this province. This new legislation will make it easier for them to provide more services to patients.

The previous government referred this matter to the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council. This government has moved beyond that to introducing the legislation, and I look forward to all-party support on this important initiative on behalf of nurses, a crucial part of our health care system in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Sudbury East, please come to order.

I have a point of order for the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I think we should at this time recognize Ruth Grier, the former Minister of Health, who is in the members' gallery and originally made this announcement in this House, with the support of the Liberal Party, of course.

The Speaker: As a matter of fact, I had a note to do this at the appropriate time, and clearly the member has usurped me. I welcome the ex-member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ms Ruth Grier.

Responses?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I'm certainly pleased to rise today on an unusual occasion, an occasion on which we can actually say to the government, "You did something good."

We support the recognition of the work of nurse practitioners as important primary health providers in this province and we look forward to the full development of this in a manner that will make this an important development for nurses in this province. We look forward to the funding that will allow nurses to be able to train and to practise in this newer profession that is finally, after a very long period of time, being brought forward by this government. We cannot continue in the vein of supporting the government, however, in the sense of its overall approach to nurses.

This day is most appropriate to celebrate with nurses who are, with good reason, coming to get what is a small piece of good news for them — small in the sense of the number of nurses it affects; important and significant in the sense of what it could augur for the future, but small given the context that you, Minister, have put nurses in this province into. The kind of work conditions that you have created for the vast majority of nurses is reprehensible. The kind of future, the long finger of apprehension and fear that you have put into nurses' lives in no way reflects the respect and the positive feelings that most Ontarians feel towards nurses and indeed towards other health practitioners.

I attended a press conference with you on some of your rehashed reannouncements of funding that you promised many times before, just as you promised this legislation many times before, and in that I heard you make a comment which I think is unfortunately more indicative than the good news you bring today of the approach of your government towards practising nurses in this province. You said you had yet to receive one phone call from one unemployed nurse in this province and therefore you assumed everything was fine for nurses. There have been thousands of nurses — and the other day in this House — who have lost their jobs, not because of happenstance, not because of technology, but because of your decision and your disdain for that profession as expressed in your actions.

Minister, you also expressed the other day that some 15,000 nurses had been through a program of being able to fit back into the economy. Instead, less than 4,000 have travelled through that program. Again, what nurses need is indeed a minister sensitive enough to understand the value of nurse practitioners, believing enough in the future of public health care to see different ways and different points of entry for practice, but also a minister who is capable of defending the key ingredients to any changes to health care in the future, which are the human resources that exist in it today.

What we would have liked to hear from you is some form of commitment to nurses in general. We would have liked for you to say that we recognize that the true value of the excellence we have in our health care system today lies, because of their numbers, largely with the nurses we have; indeed with doctors and other practitioners, but it is the 120,000 nurses we have in this province, or that we have had, who really bring us the quality and the value that we have in our health care system.

I talked to nurses recently in hospitals. I talked, for example, to obstetrics nurses who are now compelled by your cutbacks to the hospitals in which they work to do

things like exit mothers after one day's worth of care. They're doing this with all the skill that their profession enables them, with all the care that you allow them, but they know their patients are not happy; they know their patients are not pleased to be moved out of hospital that quickly. They know, most of all, that the community services which should be there for those patients, which should allow those nurses to discharge their responsibilities with a sense of care and concern, aren't there. They're not there because you're not showing the due regard that nurses require from you.

What we need to see, for those nurses, for the nurses across the province, is some form of plan. We need not just this long overdue legislation for nurse practitioners, we need a human resource plan that makes a commitment to the people who've invested their time and their energy and their care in caring for sick Ontarians. Minister, you don't show enough regard for that in this House. You don't show that in your actions, you don't show that in your hospital restructuring commission that is closing hospitals with abandon, with not one human resource plan yet being tabled, yet 24 hospitals are being closed. Minister, that's wrong.

We say to you, thank you for doing a little bit of what's right today, but we look forward to much improvement on behalf of the nurses in the province.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's indeed pleasurable to have some good news in the health field from this minister, and I want him to know very clearly that our party supports this move. He knows that. He knows that the member for Beaches-Woodbine, when she was in his office, and that the former member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore worked very hard on this material for a long time. Frankly, it was not very becoming of the minister not to have recognized the work that went on by these two members, and also not to recognize the work of the Ministry of Health employees who are here to celebrate today, because they have done a lot of this work.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): This is long overdue.
1400

Mrs Boyd: We all know, those of us who have been in government, that we simply cannot do this kind of work without many, many years of research, of negotiation and of work around the policy issues, and that is what has happened in this case.

The member for High Park-Swansea was heard to say loudly a few moments ago, "This is long overdue," and he's right. It's at least two years overdue, because this legislation was drafted and ready when our government left office and it has taken a long time for you to bring this forward.

It is very, very delightful to see the coalition of groups that support and represent registered nurses and registered practical nurses in the province, and I congratulate all of you who are here today and all your members for the kind of work you've done to ensure that this day arrives.

What the minister has announced is very important indeed, and I am delighted that he is very clear that he does not see this as a cost-saving measure. What I am concerned about is that he provides us with no informa-

tion as to how nurse practitioners are going to be paid under this legislation. We will be waiting very eagerly to find that out, because it is extremely important for us to understand that this piece of legislation is coming forward without the full primary care plan that has been promised and promised and still has not come forward.

Is the money to pay nurse practitioners going to come out of the already very, very stressed budgets of community health centres? Community health centres are for the most part the primary employers of nurse practitioners. Or are we going to ask physicians, who are some of the other primary care specialists in the province, to share some of the resources that have been allocated their way? We don't know. We don't know whether nurse practitioners are expecting to be paid differently and we are not sure until the minister makes it clear that the legislation will see these well-paid, very highly trained professionals able to work within our communities. I think he owes it to us to answer that question.

Another issue I'd like to point out to the minister is that in the expanded scope of practice that he outlines here there is nothing about the ability of a nurse practitioner to refer to a specialist. We know in terms of the midwives legislation that they are unable to refer to specialists because there is no mechanism for the specialists then to get paid in this province. We anticipate that as this goes forward, those are very serious questions that we will have to be raising, because the kind of vision the minister presents, with which we agree, around nurse practitioners having that primary care function means that without the gatekeeping function of physicians and without their ability to get to the next stage of specialty, in some cases, it is going to be very difficult for them to practise as they were meant to practise and to deliver the kinds of services you envision.

While we are supportive of the legislation — not that we've seen it of course; we assume that we will be supportive of it; we will be looking at it very carefully — we will have some areas of question and possibly, depending on how the legislation is worded, some amendments that need to be offered. This is a very important piece of legislation. It is not the kind of legislation we would be prepared to pass without thorough scrutiny and consultation with the experts in the field, who are the nurse practitioners themselves.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Yesterday the member for Dovercourt, Mr Silipo, raised a point of order with respect to standing order 106(g) concerning the referral of intended appointments to the standing committee on government agencies. The member suggested that certificates of intended appointments to the transition team and the financial advisory board provided for in the City of Toronto Act, 1997, should have been referred to the government agencies committee.

The member for Dovercourt may in fact be correct. It may be that these two bodies are defined as agencies, boards or commissions, and that intended appointments to them are subject to committee review. However, there is no way that I as Speaker can make that determination.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the government House leader stated yesterday, there are numerous examples on the record of appointments made without referral to the government agencies committee. The fact is that the government defines what is an agency, board or commission, and it is the government that knows of its own intent to make an appointment. The starting place for the government agencies committee is the certificate it receives from the public appointments secretariat. It does not ferret out appointments that should have been referred but weren't. Likewise, there is no way that a Speaker could possibly be in a position to determine which intended appointments should or should not be referred to the committee. Therefore, I don't find your particular point of order in order.

Interjections.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I have a point of privilege from the member for Sudbury East. The members for Brampton North and Chatham-Kent, if you have any more interest in proceeding with that discussion, do so in the lobby. Thank you.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a point of privilege under section 21(a) of our standing orders, which reads as follows: "Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom."

I believe that my privilege as a member has been breached, and I'm going to ask for your indulgence to explain the situation, and I ask for your intervention to make sure that my rights are restored.

Briefly, the matter is this: You will know that beginning last September, members of this caucus have been very vocal in their criticism of the cuts to the family support plan and we have raised many, many cases in this House on behalf of our constituents who have suffered serious financial consequences as a result of the cuts. In November my colleague the member for Welland-Thorold and I went to the Downsview office to see how it was functioning and discovered, of course, that the place was in an absolute shambles, and for our efforts we were rewarded with a police investigation of break-and-enter and trespassing.

Given all of our efforts to get at the root of the problem of the plan and of the problems at the Downsview office, you would no doubt be as surprised as we were to learn late last evening that members of the Conservative caucus this morning began tours of the Downsview office to see the office and to meet the staff, and in fact these tours for the caucus of the Conservative Party are going to continue over the next eight weeks. The executive assistant to the Attorney General told our staff that an invitation for opposition members to tour the building had not been extended. When a staff person for my colleague the member for London Centre called and said that she wanted to participate this morning in a tour of the building, Mr Moran, the executive assistant to Charles Harnick, said that he would allow her to partici-

pate, but he did not have the details of the tour this morning. This is the executive assistant. In fact, he never returned our call until after the tour started this morning.

I am very angry about this situation. I find it unacceptable. I find it a complete display of contempt for the opposition members, who have raised serious concerns about the operation of this office, that the Attorney General would extend an invitation to tour this facility and to talk to staff of only the government caucus. I remind you, Mr Speaker, that this is a government facility, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, the staff employed are paid by the taxpayers of Ontario, and it is not acceptable that this privilege be allowed only to the government caucus.

You will know that the practice and indeed the protocol around here are that if government employees are going to be used in any exercise of information sharing, that has to happen with members of all three caucuses. I remind you that next week for the budget lockup, for example, that is indeed what is going to happen.

I believe that my rights and my privileges as a member have been breached. The Attorney General has shown contempt for members of the opposition, particularly those who have raised concerns, and I would like you to intervene to ensure that all members of this House will be treated equally.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It has always been the intention of the ministry to allow anyone who wants to go through the family support plan to tour the facility, Mr Speaker, and we have —

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Oh, especially now.

Ms Martel: After we found out.

Mr Laughren: What a class act.

1410

The Speaker: Order. Just a minute, Attorney General. Members opposite, it's very difficult for you to stand on a point of order and have the response made and for me to hear it if you're heckling and barracking back and forth. I give the opportunity to the Attorney General because it's within his rights to say it. I ask you to allow him to state his case. Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: It's certainly our intention to have small tours arranged. We will be going caucus to caucus. In fact, we offered a tour to the member for London Centre and she indicated that she would get back to us. So it's not the intention that this be something just for government caucus members. We intend to allow small groups to tour the facility and it's our intention to go around to each caucus.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Further to that point of order, on a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Since my name has been mentioned by both of the other parties, I want to make it clear that it was after we found out that the caucus of the Tory party had been offered this that my office called. What is extraordinarily offensive to me as a singled-out member is that the executive assistant to the Attorney General — on hearing that the Attorney General himself last December, when we were talking about the bill that he was bringing through on family responsibility — offered a tour to me and not to

the rest of my caucus. So it is a double breach. It is not appropriate to offer it to only one person in the way that he did, when he found out that his superior had already offered that tour.

The Speaker: Let me say quickly that, as Speaker, I cannot compel nor direct any minister or any member to offer tours, of any place for that matter, to people within the chamber. I appreciate the fact that the member for Sudbury East brought the point of order forward, but it is completely up to and at the discretion of the ministers, and they must have the ability to offer tours —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York — to whom they —

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): No way.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party — to whom they would like to offer them. With the greatest respect, I cannot direct ministry staff to give tours to opposition members. It isn't within my power. If the minister is suggesting here today that he is prepared to offer up that opportunity, that's completely up to the minister. It is not something that I can direct ministries, ministers or premiers to do.

Mr Laughren: Mr Speaker, I do not wish to engage in a debate with you on this, but I can recall that when we were in government it was made very clear to us by people who are steeped in the traditions of this place that if we were, for example, as a ministry or minister to give a briefing to any caucus, that had to be extended to all three caucuses. That was a tradition in this place. You could not use the public sector to single out particular treatment to one caucus and not the other two. I think my colleague from Sudbury East has a good point and that the Attorney General has goofed.

The Speaker: With respect to the member for Nickel Belt, that is a debating point, and I'm not suggesting the last comment isn't. Let me say, from a point of being accessible and reasonable, that point you make is acceptable. From a point of compelling a minister to give a briefing or to give a tour to the opposition, I don't have that power.

Mr Laughren: It's a privilege.

The Speaker: No. I don't have that power to direct. I say to the member for Nickel Belt, if you would like to come back tomorrow on a point of order and cite me examples where a Speaker has directed a minister to provide a briefing or provide a tour, I'd be happy to see them. But having looked at this, not just at this time but in the past, I cannot compel a minister to give a tour or briefing to any specific member of this Legislature.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Is this the same point of order? Because I have ruled.

Mr Silipo: No, I'm not going to quibble with your ruling. I would say to you that if your ruling is that you cannot compel a minister, I think that is one thing, and I think that if we find precedent to the contrary, we'll obviously raise that with you. But I think there's a distinction between whether you can do that, whether you can compel a minister to take certain actions or not, and whether you find that in fact a member's privileges have been breached.

I think that you need to rule, sir, on the point of whether a member of the opposition who was denied the same opportunities that are offered to a member of the government, rising on a point of privilege — I think there's an issue of privilege that has been breached, and I think that on that point you can and should rule, and obviously I would urge you to rule in favour of finding that there has been a breach. Then, what the remedy is is another matter.

The Speaker: If you would like to cite me the head of privilege where I could even begin to hang my hat on that type of ruling, I'll examine it, but I don't know where that is, and I can't see where I could possibly begin to accept that argument. With the greatest respect, there's lots of informations within caucuses that are not shared amongst all members, all kinds of informations, and I —

Ms Martel: He's a government employee. Government employees —

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury East, I did hear your point of order at great length. I don't know the head of privilege where I would find an argument that would make me force a minister, compel a minister to offer tours to opposition members. I understand where you're saying privilege has been usurped or breached. If you cite me a heading, I'll be happy to look at it.

Point of order, member for St Catharines.

INTERIM SUPPLY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It is on a point of privilege, Mr Speaker, that I rise. Perhaps "Intimidation of the Legislature" might be the category it's under and I'll ask you to look into it. I'll be quite brief. It is an edict that comes from the office of the Secretary of the Management Board of Cabinet, and it says, "There has been a regrettable delay in the passage in the Legislature of the motion for interim supply to authorize government spending for six months beginning May 1, 1997."

First of all, I wasn't aware that the office of the Secretary of the Management Board of Cabinet was to tell this Legislature how it should deal with specific motions that are before the Legislature, and it seems to me that the office of the Secretary of the Management Board of Cabinet is trying to intimidate the Legislature or place pressure on the Legislature to deal with a specific motion in a specific period of time.

As you would be aware, Mr Speaker, and as all members of the Legislature would be aware, the government has the opportunity to bring forward a supply motion much earlier in the month, at any time earlier in the month, and to have it appropriately debated. Interim supply allows an opportunity for members of the Legislature to deal with matters that aren't always contained within the purview of a piece of legislation or another motion and is often a good opportunity for members to be able to canvass those issues, because they all deal with expenditures by the government.

My main concern, however, in this case is — and I guess the Chair of the Management Board will help clarify this, but I think the office of the Secretary is a civil service position, and it seems to me when an edict

of this kind is put out, that it could be judged as an effort to intimidate or direct the Legislature in the way it should deal with a particular motion.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Government House leader.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Well, I guess two words come to mind: total nonsense. There is a need if paycheques, for example —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: In the lives of many working people the paycheque is a very significant event, every week, or two weeks, or month or whenever it comes in. People normally get to plan their life around the arrival of the paycheque or the funds appearing in their account through electronic means. It only makes good sense to inform people if that particular paycheque could be delayed. In this case the government has allocated two full days to the interim supply, we're going into the third —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the members to come to order. Member for Cochrane North, thank you. Member for Cochrane North, I'm not going to debate it. Government House leader, I'm not really interested in hearing about the length of time of your debate, etc. The point of order was about this letter. If you could address the letter, I'd really appreciate it. Thank you.

Hon David Johnson: To the best of my knowledge, the letter is simply an information piece. It in no way affects or intimidates this House. To read it in that light is utter nonsense. We all know that. There's a requirement to inform people if there's a possibility. I haven't got a copy of the letter, but from what has been read to me, I can only take it that it's simply an information letter to inform members — probably gone out on a fairly broad basis, members of the civil service, perhaps elected representatives, I'm not sure — of the possibility of a delay in their cheques. I think people would want to be informed of that fact and I suspect that there would be severe criticism if people were not informed and if indeed it did happen, which is quite a distinct possibility given the situation we're facing here today.

1420

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I rise on this point partly because I was the one who was speaking last yesterday evening when the House adjourned. But in speaking specifically to the letter that has been written and the words "regrettable delay" in it, I wonder if the Chair of Management Board would tell us how is it that he has suddenly become so concerned with people getting paycheques — the ones he hasn't laid off, of course — at this late date, when he had an opportunity to have this supply motion debated last Thursday and because he bungled it —

The Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt, I appreciate that input, but I'm trying to deal with the letter. His point of order really was out of order.

Hon David Johnson: Then rule him out of order.

The Speaker: Well, I did stand and rule them out of order, with the greatest respect, and I ruled you out of order as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker: This appears to be an eventful day we're having today, so I would ask the members to come to order.

Let me say to the members that, having read the beginning of this passage, I must admit that I think I should reserve on this particular letter. I think there may be an opportunity to review it. I heard only the first paragraph. I've had opportunity to read that. I haven't read the whole letter, but I will tell you that I will reserve and report back with respect to the propriety of the letter, the contents, and I will try to ascertain the dimensions of how far it was sent and to whom it was sent. I think that's the best I can do at this time.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC GALLERY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a separate point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier today there were it looked to me like hundreds of adult learning students lined up to come into the House, many of whom are from my riding. Looking in the chamber, I would say that many of them have not been admitted. I realize there are tours, I understand that, but I would like to know what happened to those students who were lined up. Will they be able to get in, or have they been put in an overflow room or what?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Mr Speaker, I can help you on that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Well, I always need help, so I will ask the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: There are in fact several hundred adult education students who have come down to make their concerns known to the Minister of Education. Clearly it was impossible to accommodate them all in the gallery. The security has opened up an overflow. They can accommodate some 30 to 40 more. I am not sure that many more could be accommodated, but I hope as the tours leave, they will process more of the people outside.

The Speaker: To you, as those people leave and come and go, so many will be accommodated as well. I thank the member for Fort William for her assistance and we will do our very best.

Ms Churley: Thank you.

The Speaker: You're welcome. It's time for oral questions.

VISITORS

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Oh, actually, I was just going to do that. I thank the Minister of Agriculture for reminding me. I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Her Excellency Susana Ruiz Cerutti, the ambassador of the republic of Argentina, and Mr George Stok-Capella, consul general of Argentina. Welcome.

Now it's time for oral questions. The leader of the official opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. I want to raise with you a matter that I am sure you will recognize is of the utmost gravity. On September 4, 1995, 35 men, women and children, all members of the Stoney Point band, formed a camp in Ipperwash Provincial Park. They were engaged in a peaceful, unarmed protest.

But on September 6 something went terribly wrong. An OPP officer shot and killed 38-year-old Dudley George. That officer was recently found guilty of criminal negligence causing death and it was found that he lied, both during the investigation leading up to the charge being laid and in court, together with two other officers. Of course that is not the end of the matter. There are a number of outstanding questions in this which lead to your government's involvement in this matter.

You maintain there is no such involvement, so I'm going to offer you now this opportunity, because I'm sure you're going to welcome this, to call a public inquiry into this affair.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the opportunity. As the member knows and as every expert opinion has been given, including the Liberals when they were in power, and the NDP, and everybody who's commented on this, it is not appropriate to call an inquiry while the matter is before the court. I understand from the papers there is to be an appeal. While I appreciate the opportunity, I think you would agree with me it is totally inappropriate (a) to comment and (b) to call an inquiry at this time.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I'm not asking for your comment, I'm asking for you to make a commitment to calling an inquiry. If you want to call that inquiry some time down the road after all legal proceedings have come to a conclusion, that's one thing, but I'm asking for your commitment, Premier, to call an inquiry.

I'm asking for that commitment because what we're talking about here, and I'm not sure you understand the seriousness of this, is a terrible tragedy. For the first time in over 100 years in the province of Ontario a native land claims protester was shot and killed. We know the police lied about their actions. We know there was some communication between representatives of your government and the police. We know that concern about this is growing daily, and more and more people across the province are beginning to ask two very important questions which ought to be answered: First, how did this happen? Second, what can we do to ensure it does not happen again?

Premier, once again, can you not today commit to calling a public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harris: One of the problems you get into until you wait till legal proceedings are over is getting into language or things that aren't true. I think the member referred to a land claim. There has not been nor is there even to this day any land claim on the property in question, so I think it's important that in your rhetoric you actually get the facts correct. That's one of the

reasons why you wait until all the cases before the courts are settled and then you take a look: Is there still information that would be helpful to prevent what we all acknowledge was a tragedy, a very serious situation, something we don't ever want to happen again?

The court case has been following it, has outlined some of the reasons why something happened that we all want avoided. But there are legal matters before there. There is a matter of justice, there is a matter of an appeal before the courts, and that's why every Premier, every Attorney General, every Solicitor General, every government has waited until those cases are completed. Then you assess: Is there still information we need to know and what are the parameters that are best to go about that? So we will do that in the logical way.

Mr McGuinty: I think you owe it to the family and friends of Dudley George, I think you owe it to all aboriginal groups throughout the province, I think you owe it to all Ontarians, I think you owe it to the members of your government and I think you owe it to yourself to begin to take steps today to remove the cloud that hangs over your head.

There is a very real question as to the involvement of your government in the affairs leading up to the death of Dudley George, an Ontario resident. You have done nothing to this point in time to show that you have any genuine interest in getting to the bottom of this, in removing that cloud that hangs over this very government and ensuring that Ontarians are answered with respect to two simple questions: First, how did this happen, how could this possibly happen in Ontario as it hasn't happened in over 100 years? Second, what can we do to ensure that it never, ever happens again? All I'm asking for is a commitment to hold an inquiry at some point in time.

Hon Mr Harris: There has not, certainly in my opinion or in the Attorney General's opinion or in the government's opinion, been anything come forward that offers any shred of any kind of a cloud other than ones you may want to allege or are trying to put there. I want to make that clear.

Second, we also owe it, as a good government does, and the Attorney General owes it to the justice system, to those who have been charged, to those who have been accused, due process under the law. As every government before us has had respect for that equal to the respect we have for the George family, that we have for the natives involved, we have to make sure that procedures in the future we hope would never have this happen again.

As a government, we have to be cognizant not only of doing all the right things, but doing the right things at the right time. So we take that extra onus on us, over and above what you seem to be prepared to accept. That is the price of government. We're prepared to accept that.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to follow up on that. It has to do with the same issue. I think there is total, ample, obvious evidence that demands this public inquiry right now. You have said publicly, Premier, that the OPP were acting all on their own, that they had sole responsibility, that whatever happened at

Ipperwash was their responsibility only. We have a very different view of that. We hold you and your government primarily responsible for the handling at Ipperwash. I'll give you some evidence.

You and your government decided that the province would take steps to remove the occupiers ASAP. That took away the OPP's options for negotiations. You decided to treat this not as a land claim but as a trespass issue. That took away the OPP's options. Your Conservative member, with your full knowledge and consent and support, was a constant visitor at the command post. Your Conservative member, I assume with the knowledge of what you planned, had in the paper "Queen's Park To Take Hard Line Against Park Occupiers" the day of the shooting. Will you now agree, because the evidence is clear for the need for a public inquiry, to hold a public —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Hon Mr Harris: I think I've pretty well completely answered the question, other than to repeat that for some reason or other you seem to want to get some rhetoric into it that's never been in it. No one, to the best of my knowledge, has alleged there was a land claim, then, before 1995, and post, right up to and including today. You have accused us of not treating this as a land claim. Well, guilty. Nobody, including the natives, has said it was a land claim. So let's just get that on the record, because you keep seeming to want to slip little things in there that even the natives aren't claiming. Other than that, I've answered all your questions and at the appropriate time we will do the right thing.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): You said shoot to kill.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Phillips: The first nations entered the park to —
Interjections.

The Speaker: Stand up and say it; I didn't hear it.

Mr Phillips: May I proceed, Speaker?

The Speaker: Order. Does someone over here want to stand on a point of order? I didn't hear the comment, if there was a comment.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, I think the member for Cochrane North was completely out of order by indicating that the Premier gave the order to shoot to kill.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, I didn't hear the comment. If the comment was made or if you want to withdraw it, you have the opportunity at this point in time.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Before we get into this, maybe you should see whether or not the member's going to withdraw.

Mr Len Wood: I had said nothing wrong, as far as I'm concerned. I asked the Premier a question. It was his response —

The Speaker: He's not withdrawing.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, that's your decision. Supplementary, Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I want to follow up on the land claim. The first nations occupied that park because they believed there was a sacred burial ground in that park. As a matter of fact, this same article the day of the shooting, only hours before the shooting, goes on to say, "A group of Stoney Point natives believe that it holds a sacred burial ground." That is a land claim. That is why they went in there. The government months later laid charges. They were forced to drop those charges. Why? Because there was evidence that existed here with the government, within yards of where we're sitting here, that there was a sacred burial ground there. The government was forced to drop charges.

I say again, Premier, the evidence is crystal clear that it is you we want the inquiry about and that there's no need for you today to deny holding that inquiry. We will accept legal advice that says the inquiry cannot begin until there is an opportunity for fair trials to take place, but I repeat to you again, the evidence is there. Will you commit today to hold a public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harris: The last time I recall somebody or an Attorney General rushing into a public inquiry was Ian Scott on Patti Starr. We all know what happened when it was prematurely set up. We all know what happened when the criteria were set up prematurely. We all know it had to be stopped; the money wasted and withdrawn. We all know what a fiasco it was.

We're determined not to make the same mistake. We're determined to wait until the criminal matters before the court are finished with. When that is taken care of, we will make the appropriate decision in the interests of all concerned and we will also respect the justice system and the correct time frame.

Mr Phillips: I'll be as direct as I can, Premier: We think you personally are responsible for what took place at Ipperwash. The only way we will get that clarified is through a public inquiry. I want to be very clear: No one is suggesting the public inquiry start until there are assurances it will not jeopardize court cases. We accept that. What we want from you today is a commitment to hold those public inquiries.

I'll go further on the evidence. You said in the Legislature that your office — because we requested the files, you said: "We have no files. There are no files, there are no records, because we had no involvement." But we know differently. We know that your executive assistant was at meetings on September 5 and September 6. Those meetings said and instructed, "The province will take steps to remove the occupiers ASAP." What we want from you today and what the public have a right to demand is a commitment. We don't want this thing hidden, swept under the rug, stonewalled. We want a commitment today to a full public inquiry so the public can get to the root of this sorry, sorry Ontario tale.

Hon Mr Harris: With respect to any allegations, you are wrong, and at the appropriate time we'll respond.

The Speaker: New question, third party, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Premier: The Premier continues to try to skate around this issue. In other situations like this where someone is killed, there may in fact be a criminal proceeding, but at

the same time that criminal proceeding is occurring, the coroner's office will make a statement that there will be a coroner's inquiry. The coroner's office will make that statement that there will be a coroner's inquiry so that all those concerned with the death can be reassured that all the information will come out, not just the criminal issues, not just the narrow question of who is criminally responsible.

Premier, that's what people across Ontario are asking of you. Will you give a commitment at this time that there will be a public inquiry? The public inquiry can take place after the criminal matters are dealt with, but the commitment to a public inquiry must come now.

Hon Mr Harris: No, it mustn't.

Mr Hampton: The Premier does nothing but reinforce the growing impression that he has something to hide and that he is trying to hide something. This is not a difficult matter. It's not difficult. Coroners often give a commitment to hold a coroner's inquiry even as criminal issues are being dealt with in the court.

There is nothing stopping the Premier from standing in his place today and saying to people all across Ontario and indeed to first nations people all across Canada that a public inquiry will be held into this matter; that the involvement of the Conservative member, Mr Beaubien, in this will be dealt with; and that the police logs will be dealt with, the police logs which continue to dribble out day after day, which are not necessarily related to the criminal events but are certainly related to the death of Dudley George.

The Premier can give that commitment. We're asking the Premier: Give that commitment that you will hold a public inquiry, and give it now.

1440

Hon Mr Harris: I think I've answered the question, and I'm not the coroner.

Mr Hampton: This is the information people want to know about. We know meetings were held with political staff, including a personal assistant to the Premier, just before the shooting. We know that Conservative MPP Mr Beaubien was at the OPP command post communicating with the Premier's office at the very time the OPP officers were deciding to force a confrontation with the native people. We know the government briefing notes state that the government wanted the occupiers out of the park ASAP. We know that the OPP changed their long-standing strategy of avoiding confrontation with aboriginal people just after this government took office and just before this event happened. We know that the police logs state, Inspector John Carson stated, "The Premier and the Solicitor General want to deal with this," and to deal with it right away.

Police logbooks don't mention the Premier specifically for no reason. Premier, you're in this up to your neck. Call a public inquiry so the truth —

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: All the information that should be made public while the court case is on has been made public, I believe; if there is other information, certainly there are vehicles to do so. But I think when the case is there, all of the information that has been made public indicates that the government's involvement was solely to

seek an injunction. Other than that, I haven't seen one shred of any evidence, innuendo, anything other than in your mind, that suggests anything else. That includes statements from the commissioner of the OPP. That includes any of the information that's there; it includes any of the notes that are there; it includes any of the evidence that to date has come out at the trial.

So I can say to you that there is absolutely nothing there, that you are trying to make things up. You're not doing a very good job of it. But I want to assure the people, the public, the George family, the natives, of this: We will ensure that all of the information, all of the facts, all of the answers, anything they need access to or information, will be made available through the appropriate mechanism, whether it's a coroner's inquiry that you seem to be calling for, whether it's a public inquiry —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. I appreciate it. New question, third party. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: If the Premier will sit down, we can get on with this. I want to call the Premier on the comments he just made.

Premier, your lawyer, acting for you, wrote a letter to lawyers acting for the George family in this matter in the civil case trying to intimidate them, suggesting to them that if they released information, your government was going to come after them.

I put it to you, Premier, that you have done everything possible to stop information coming out, to stop briefing notes from coming out and to silence the lawyers for the George family. I put it to you that you have tried to avoid accountability on this. When are you going to call a public inquiry so that people across this province can have some confidence that all of the information is in fact coming out? When are you going to do that?

Hon Mr Harris: At the appropriate time.

Mr Hampton: I'll go back at it again, because the Premier continues to want to try to weave and dodge. Just like a coroner's inquiry, there is absolutely nothing stopping you from indicating here today in this Legislature —

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, the government members may think this is a laughing matter; people across this province don't.

Interjection: You are.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): — then we'll see who's smiling and smirking.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Culture, come to order. Member for Dovercourt, come to order. Member for Cochrane North, come to order. Thank you. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Just as the situation exists with a coroner's inquiry, just as a coroner can indicate on the public record while criminal proceedings are being held that a coroner's inquest is going to be held to inquire into all of the issues surrounding a death, not just the narrow, criminal issues, you can stand in this House today, Premier, and you can call for a public inquiry. You can commit that a public inquiry will be held so that people across this province will have confidence that all of the information will come out. As it is now, information comes out in dribs and drabs. Police logs are coming out

in dribs and drabs. What it's creating is a cloud, a great cloud of uncertainty and doubt, first of all now with respect to the OPP, the judge found that they were not honest; secondly with respect to the involvement of one of your backbenchers, and thirdly with respect to yourself. Clear the air, Premier. Call a public inquiry. Do the decent and right thing.

Hon Mr Harris: I want to say this: When the member makes allegations about members of my caucus laughing, they are. They are laughing at you.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: I think the Premier's arrogance says much more about him than anyone else here.

I want to say to the Premier again, it is not me who changed the OPP's approach to dealing with first nations conflicts. That OPP approach, which had stood for at least five years, and longer, was changed soon after you became the government. It was not me who wrote a police log which states, "Inspector John Carson stated Premier and Solicitor General want to deal with this."

Premier, doesn't it occur to you how unusual it is that you are referred to in a police log, in a police log which specifically relates to the death of an individual, for which an OPP officer has now been found criminally negligent? I have to tell you, Premier, the OPP do not put extraneous information in their police logs. They're careful about what they put in their police logs because they know they may be called to account for them. That in itself, the fact that your name and the Solicitor General is referred to in the police log dealing immediately with this issue, is cause enough for a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Harris: I have to say that the police officers are careful what they put in a log, far more careful than the allegations and the freedom with which you throw the truth around in this Legislature. Far more careful than that, I might add.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): That comes close to calling him a liar.

Hon Mr Harris: That is close, yes.

Mr Hampton: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: If I have said something untrue here, I want the Premier to indicate what it is. I have merely read from what is already on the public record.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): He said it was an untruth.

The Speaker: I don't think it's a point of privilege, with great respect, to the member of the third party.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Is he going to withdraw? He called my leader a liar.

The Speaker: With the greatest respect, to the member for Lake Nipigon, I didn't hear that. I heard everything he said. I didn't hear him call him that. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: The question today that I seem to be getting is one over timing. I suggest to all members of the Legislature, the George family, all those who have an interest in this matter, that the appropriate time is in fact when the court cases are completed. Then we can look at the most appropriate vehicle; then we can look at the parameters; then we can look at that information which still people are looking for.

The member has also referenced a lot about the chief coroner. He's right. The chief coroner could call an inquest into this. I don't know if you're calling for that

now as well, but that is a possibility, I suppose. That's up to the chief coroner. Perhaps he will make that decision in the fullness of time, at the appropriate time, if he feels that's justified as well.

In the meantime, let me assure you that —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question, official opposition.

1450

Mr Phillips: There is clear, detailed evidence of the need for a public inquiry. In our opinion, that's not in dispute.

You have avoided committing to a public inquiry. We can only surmise the reason is that you intend to not call one; that is the reason why you're delaying. Otherwise, today, Premier, you would get up in the House and say, "We are going to have a public inquiry as soon as we legally can begin it." The evidence is you did make the decision to get them out of the park ASAP. That's clear evidence. You did decide to ignore their claims there was a burial ground in there. That's clear evidence. You did decide that you have no records in your office. That's clear evidence.

Will you today commit to that public inquiry? Otherwise, there will be the suspicion very much in the public that you have no intention of ever calling a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Harris: With the greatest respect, unless somebody wishes to misrepresent my position to the public, they'll have great confidence that we will do the right thing at the right time.

Mr Phillips: It is you, Premier, who made the decision to get them out of the park as soon as possible. It is you, Premier, who said, "I have no records because we had no involvement." It's you, Premier, who decided to ignore the burial ground claims, which is a land claim. So when you say people will have confidence that you will make the right decision, I repeat to you: Will you today commit to holding a public inquiry so we can get at the heart of your involvement and your government's involvement in this affair?

Hon Mr Harris: I find it passing strange that the member is prepared to go on the public record, particularly here in the Legislature, with all the things that he knows, and then he says we need an inquiry to find out if that's in fact what he knows. I want to say that as a preface to the question that's there.

Second, I think, and I repeat, that unless some member of this Legislature or somebody else wishes to go out and misrepresent our position to the public, the public will have great confidence that (a) we will respect the law, we will respect the timing and the rule of the law with not wanting to interfere with any court cases. We respect the rights of any individuals who may have been charged in this. At the same time, in doing that, we will do exactly the right thing to satisfy that all information is made public in this. We have absolutely nothing to hide. There is absolutely nothing other than some kind of incongruous web of facts that you wish to throw together in some sort of way in your own twisted minds that you think mean something other than the truth. There is absolutely nothing —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, Premier, please. New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: It's clear that the Premier either doesn't understand the gravity of this or he wants to stay away from the gravity of this.

Premier, here's the problem: You yourself and the Solicitor General are mentioned in the very police logs that relate to the incidents surrounding the death of Dudley George. You are referred to as wanting this issue dealt with right away.

You may think it's okay for you to stand here and say, "Well, I, Mike Harris, believe everything is fine," but there is a way to get to the bottom of this. You see, a public inquiry has the right to subpoena people. A public inquiry has the right to take information under oath. A public inquiry has the capacity to get all the facts in and to get them in under oath. A public inquiry has the capacity to clear your name and to ask, "What's your name doing in the police log?"

Premier, I think you owe it to the people to get to the bottom of this, and the way you do that is to —

The Speaker: Thank you, leader of the third party. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I do intend to get to the bottom of this and I also owe it to the people to get to the bottom of this, and then the government has an added responsibility to get to the bottom of this at the right time. We accept that responsibility, one that opposition members don't have. They don't have that unless they choose to accept being responsible, and neither one of the opposition parties appears to want to do that, on a whole series of matters, whether it's budgets or other areas of responsibility of governing.

As long as you don't accept it, that's fine, but we do accept that and we will do the right thing, and we'll also do it at the right time.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the Premier that the right time, as in a coroner's inquiry, is to give that commitment to people now. All the questions are out there now. Every day questions grow. You read an editorial in the *Toronto Star*: "Harris ducked calling an inquiry for a year by saying it would interfere with Deane's trial. His current excuses — a possible appeal of the verdict and a civil suit — are even thinner." Or I could read the *London Free Press*, which quotes the fact that you are in fact referred to in the police logs, the very police logs that deal with the incident directly related to the death.

Premier, the questions are out there now and the questions are growing every day, so why not commit to holding that public inquiry? Give that commitment today and that public inquiry can begin down the road, but the commitment to have the questions answered has to happen today. Will you give that commitment?

Hon Mr Harris: I give the commitment that in the right time, in the right way, the questions will be answered.

COURT SYSTEM

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Attorney General. The people of this province

remember all too well the frustration they felt when in 1990 some 50,000 cases were dismissed before coming to trial as a result of the Askov decision. On November 5 last year you announced that your ministry was launching a major attack on the backlog in the criminal justice system and that one of those locations would be the provincial court in Newmarket. Could you please inform the Legislature of the results of that blitz on the backlog?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for York-Mackenzie for the question. As I indicated last week, reducing court backlogs is the number one priority of the Ministry of the Attorney General. We have had, as you alluded to, a long-standing problem in this area, such that 50,000 cases were thrown out at one point in time.

We have set up a blitz, as you're aware, and we're now seeing some very positive results from this blitz of courts. I reported on the progress in Scarborough last week. In Newmarket we've opened two blitz courts. We've reduced the time it takes for an accused to have a case set for trial from 10 to three months and we've reduced the number of charges in progress before the courts by 10.6% since the beginning of the blitz in November 1996. These are very concrete results that prove that our blitz is working to prevent cases being thrown out because they take too long to come to trial.

Mr Klees: This government has made a very clear commitment to community safety. In fact, community safety was a cornerstone of the Common Sense Revolution and reform of the justice system was very much a part of that commitment. The people of this province want to ensure that our justice system would back up the good work the police are doing in our communities.

My constituents want to know that that commitment to community safety is being followed through by the government. Could you please tell me what specific initiatives and what resources you are bringing to ensure that our communities are safe?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again I thank the member for York-Mackenzie for the question. We've launched a major blitz on the backlog in the six most heavily burdened courts in the province. We've assigned 40 officials to the project, including 25 crown attorneys and 15 law clerks. We've committed \$1 million to \$2 million to this project. Since the beginning of January, the case management team has worked very closely with police on an integrated review of files to help speed up backlogged cases.

The blitz courts are a first step in addressing the systemic problems of long-standing court backlogs. We're working closely and cooperatively with the judiciary and the police to find viable long-term solutions to prevent a buildup of cases in the future. By clearing the backlog, we will make sure that our communities stay safe and that victims' rights are respected and strengthened. We're committed to this and we are seeing real, positive results so far in our blitz courts.

ADULT EDUCATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. There are a large number of

adult education day school students who are in the galleries today and there were at least a couple of hundred more outside who were hoping to be able to get in. They are here today to ask you to protect their opportunity to get the education they need. They are here to tell you how important it is to them to get their secondary school diplomas and to earn them by learning, not by spending money to write a test.

These people are worried about what will happen to their chance for an education when you take over control of their educational future. Will you today guarantee full funding for adult day school education for the future?

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order in the galleries. You can't do that. I just caution the galleries that there are no demonstrations. That's definitely considered a demonstration.

1500

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I am a little surprised that the member opposite would recycle a discussion that I believe we had fully a year ago. I was surprised at the time a year ago that the member opposite could not understand the distinction between a system designed to deliver adolescent education services and one designed for adult programs. I'm particularly surprised given that there has been a year from the time of that discussion and we now know that most school boards that offered full adult day school in Ontario have restructured their service to offer continuing education day school with focuses on literacy, numeracy and technology.

In addition we now know, a year later, that there is an increasing use of our independent learning centres, particularly by people in remote areas. We know that the colleges right across Ontario continue to offer programs for adults in Ontario basic skills programs. So Ontario continues to offer an abundance of training and education programs designed for and applied for adults in Ontario, and we continue to fund these way above the numbers that most provinces do.

Mrs McLeod: I ask the minister to listen to the concerns of the people who are here in the galleries today. These are not adolescents; these are adults. They know what they need. They know what this minister is offering is not what they need. They deserve an education. They need an education. They want to get a secondary school diploma.

The minister talks about last year. It was indeed a year ago when this minister started his search for the \$1 billion that he promised his Premier he could deliver, and the places he started to find his \$1 billion were in junior kindergarten at one end and adult education at the other end. This minister cut adult day school education funding by 50% and he has devastated adult day school education programs in all the communities outside Toronto that were dependent on his grants. Enrolment declined an average of 50%, and in some places the enrolment is down by as much as 80%.

This is what is going to happen in Toronto too if you do not change your funding policies. Your idea of equality is going to mean that many more adults will not get their education. I ask you: Will you in this next

budget undo the damage you have already done? Will you restore full funding?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What's the Mulroney staffer telling you to say?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): — another \$2 billion cut.

The Speaker: Thank you. Member for St Catharines. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: Don't blame the feds.

The Speaker: Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I don't want a conversation taking place when I've sat down either. Thanks.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to assure the member opposite that there is no one in this chamber who values adult education more than I. I don't think there's anyone in this chamber who has been involved in adult literacy and other programs. I also want to assure the member opposite that I have talked with a number of people involved in adult education right across this province, people who deliver adult education and people who have received that benefit, and I have been thanked in community after community for putting together the GED program in Ontario.

Your government could have done it. You could have helped any number of adult learners in Ontario move through the secondary school program into post-secondary programs, into post-secondary training programs, into jobs faster, which is what they needed.

I believe our development of the GED program in Ontario and our track record for designing programs specifically for the needs of adults are without parallel, and we will move forward in providing these programs and in making sure that we have the best literacy programs for adults in North America.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier. Earlier this week you announced the first candidates for your government's privatization: the Province of Ontario Savings Office, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the Ortech research facilities and three tree nurseries. At the same time, you've appointed a privatization czar, Mr Paul Currie, from the Bay Street firm of Coopers and Lybrand, and you're going to pay him over \$200,000 a year.

Premier, many people suspect that there is a longer list of agencies, boards, commissions and corporations to be privatized, but you haven't shared that with the public. Can you tell me who outside the Ontario government has had an opportunity to see the full, long list of what your government plans to privatize? Can you tell us who may have seen a longer list?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know that there is a longer list, but let me be very clear and upfront and public that there are many, many, many things that government does that we have suggested should be put to a test. These are taxpayers' dollars providing a service to the public. Is there a way or can somebody do it better and more efficiently? If you have a suggestion for any of the thousands of things we do, we'll put it to the test.

Mr Hampton: The Premier avoided answering my question. I asked you if there were a longer list and if anyone outside the government has seen this longer list.

I want to read to you a memo. It says: "I had lunch with Hugh Bolton on Monday, March 17, and learned on a confidential basis that Paul Currie," from the Toronto office of Coopers and Lybrand, "is leaving the firm to head the agency about to be established by the Ontario government to direct the privatization of a very long list of government departments, corporations and agencies." "A very long list" is referred to, Premier. The memo goes on to say that this gentleman Bolton, who works at Coopers and Lybrand, has seen the long list.

My question to you again, Premier, is this: Have you personally, or has any member of the Mike Harris cabinet, met with Hugh Bolton or anyone else at Coopers and Lybrand to discuss how long the list is and to discuss —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I haven't directly, specifically, with a list or not. I mean, I have met with all kinds of people and publicly acknowledged — I don't know why anything would be private — that we believe we should put to the test all kinds of things. In the Common Sense Revolution, we talked about LCBO, TVOntario. We talked about Hydro, which obviously is one of those that are going to be put to the test, various components of Hydro that are there, and so there are areas that are there.

I know that you actually quietly, without any process really, went ahead and outsourced a number of things; even the NDP did that. But I say this to you: Unless you are suggesting to us we shouldn't see if we can get better service, better quality, better price for the taxpayers, I would assume that you are encouraging us to put everything government does to this kind of test where it makes sense to do so. If you have a list you'd like to submit, I'll give it to the minister.

1510

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, as you're aware, this government is delivering on its pledge to create a positive environment for the private sector to grow and create jobs. Employment remains an important issue for my constituents in Oshawa, as it does throughout the province.

I understand that the Ministry of Education and Training is delivering a new program, called the career and employment preparation program, to Durham region, which will help participants from Oshawa and Durham overcome employment barriers. Could you give us the details on how this and other employment initiatives will help my constituents in the job market?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Oshawa for the question. In fact, unemployment, particularly unemployment among our youth, is a very high priority for this government. On April 1, we launched the career and

employment preparation program, which will serve more than 90,000 people in Ontario. Most of those people are young people who desperately need this kind of service.

Unlike previous governments, our career and employment preparation program will operate in conjunction with employers in the private sector, who know how to develop and train young people for real long-term jobs. We're very proud of this program. We're also in the process of reforming our secondary school system and our apprenticeship programs to improve the opportunities for young people in Ontario. I was also proud to announce just a matter of a few weeks ago that we're investing \$37.5 million in the Ontario summer jobs strategy, which will assist over 34,000 young people in the province.

Mr Ouellette: This government's summer job program for this year will create jobs for youth in my constituency of Oshawa as well as the entire province. These jobs will provide youth with valuable work experience. I understand this year's summer job program will assist about 34,000 youth in getting summer jobs. However, the recent NDP —

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): "Go get your own job." That's the kind of job program you have.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'm warning you to come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, I'll warn you to come to order. I've kind of run out of patience today. I'm warning you to come to order.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): It has been a difficult day.

The Speaker: It's been a difficult day, you're right. Come to order. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, come to order too.

Supplementary.

Mr Ouellette: As I was saying, a recent NDP release indicates that their program provided for 54,216 youth jobs, and my constituents are expressing concerns. Minister, could you clarify the record for us on this issue?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can understand some of the confusion on the part of your constituents. As you know, the leader of the third party seems to have a passion for numbers and I have in the past suggested that he might want to check those with his research staff from time to time. In this case again, he's got his numbers wrong.

The previous NDP government never created 54,216 summer jobs, as has been put out recently in a communiqué. In fact, I have with me today the communiqué from March 25, 1994, which states that the NDP created Jobs Ontario, which put together 24,000 jobs. Their program, which cost more money, assisted 10,000 less students in the province of Ontario. I'm glad the member for Oshawa gave us the opportunity to set the record straight today.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You know what? That was out of order and I ask the member for Lake Nipigon to withdraw.

Mr Pouliot: I will withdraw, sir.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask you about the comments that your Minister of Finance made to the Toronto Star yesterday to the effect that your government will force municipalities to shield low-income earners and seniors and disabled persons from sharp tax increases. He said, as a matter of fact, "We are sending them," meaning the municipalities, "a direct policy message that you have to help low-income seniors and disabled persons."

Premier, are you finally admitting that property taxes are going to soar in this province as a result of your new property tax assessment system and as a result of your downloading scheme which is going to increase the local property taxation by about \$1 billion in this province? We've heard from municipalities like Kingston that it's going to increase \$28 million; Sudbury, by over \$100 million; Niagara, by \$73 million. Are you finally admitting that, as a result of your downloading, property taxes in this province are going to increase?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, we're not.

Mr Gerretsen: These figures put together by over 100 municipalities already throughout this province, put together by independent CAOs, treasurers of those municipalities, by mayors of all political parties, clearly indicate that the average property taxes will rise by about 10% in this province, but in some cases they may be as much as 40% or 50%. If you're saying that's not the case, why don't you release the studies or authorize your Minister of Finance to release the studies you're relying on that in effect there is no downloading on to the property tax system?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member will want to know that the amendment that the minister was putting forward had to do only with Bill 106 that dealt with assessment. What we have clearly acknowledged with Bill 106 reassessing is that while there will not be as a result of that legislation one cent of total tax increase, there are inequities in the tax system. What the minister has said is that while the residents of Scarborough, for example, have been overpaying on their assessment, there are some people in Toronto, for example, who have been underpaying. In spite of that, the opposition members from Scarborough continue to oppose reforming the assessment system.

None the less, I want to be very clear about this: What the minister has suggested is that if municipalities have unfairly underassessed and undertaxed seniors for a period of time, they should take that into account —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: — when they go to a fair system: not one cent total increase, but there were inequities within the system, which I guess explains why neither one —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. I understand you confirmed to the media today that you intend to open a public hospital under the Public Hospitals Act at the Amalguin community health centre in Burk's Falls, and what's more, you

announced that you were going to be allocating an additional \$450,000 to operate those six beds, even though your government has cut hundreds of thousands of dollars from hospitals all over the province: \$400,000 from the hospital in Petrolia, \$475,000 from Penetanguishene, \$430,000 from Campbellford Memorial.

Minister, for weeks, for months, you've been hiding behind the hospital restructuring committee, saying you're not responsible for the closure of hospitals all over this province, and yet today we see you confirming that you're going to open a hospital and that you're doing that without any consultation with the restructuring commission, without any advice from them. Don't you think this is a double standard?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): This particular institution has always been a hospital. The designation as a hospital never changed from the previous government. What the previous government did, without any consultation it closed the 15-bed hospital that used to be in Burk's Falls. They left nothing behind —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): It wasn't without consultation. There was a DHC report. Why the heck won't you guys say things accurately?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau. Thank you.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Just trying to help.

The Speaker: I know you are, and I'll be very helpful for you in a moment. If you could come to order, I'd appreciate it. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: It was a 15-bed hospital serving the people of Burk's Falls. The NDP closed that and then they left no beds behind. After Mr Eves and I, in opposition, constantly hounded you about the fact that that community needed some beds, at least some observation beds and some overnight beds — the doctors had consistently told you that — you then decided to make it a community health centre.

It still was a mess when we came to office, so in December 1995 we set up the Amalguin task force that was made up of health care experts, not politicians, and they recommended six beds, and they did that some time ago. Because we have said health care restructuring is not about saving money overall, it's about putting every penny and more back in, it's time to open six beds in Burk's Falls which never should have been closed in the first place.

1520

Mrs Boyd: There are several problems with the explanation you give. As you know, this was closed in 1992 as a result of a report by the district health council. The politicians who make up the reeves, not to mention the Deputy Premier of this province, have indeed exerted pressure on you.

Minister, do you not understand that you have set up a halt to the closure of rural hospitals on the grounds that you need a rural hospital policy? You have done that at the behest of other Tory members. We haven't seen that rural hospital policy, we haven't seen any report in that area from the restructuring commission to talk about what the need is, we haven't seen any of the rigour of the

kinds of criteria that have been brought to bear in every other community.

We have seen \$800 million come out of hospitals all over the province, and yet you think there isn't some problem with your deciding, at the pressure of your Deputy Premier, to put this hospital back into his riding? You can't get away with that. People understand there is a double standard going on here, and especially your Tory backbenchers who are facing cuts in their hospitals understand —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member should simply get up and admit that they shouldn't have closed the 15 beds in the first place. But she doesn't want to do that. She wants to play politics and force this into the political realm. The task force, which was at arm's length from all of us, made up of the experts, in consultation with the DHC, is recommending six beds. These aren't full acute care beds, they're transitional and respite beds.

Ms Lankin: Come on. During the filibuster Ernie Eves stormed into your office —

Mrs Boyd: We have all heard from the bureaucracy.

Hon Mr Wilson: We've been opening respite beds across the province, and Burk's Falls meets the —

The Speaker: Excuse me, Minister. I don't want to warn the members for London Centre and Beaches-Woodbine again. Come to order, please. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: This is the sort of political innuendo that frankly makes people sick in this province.

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is directed to the minister responsible for seniors. Yesterday's Toronto Star quotes Dr David Naylor, the chief executive officer of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, saying that there is a wide disparity in the levels of home care services for patients in communities across Ontario. I know in my own community of Mississauga there are fewer home care resources than in many other communities. What I would like to know is, is this a concern for the government? It certainly is a very big concern for me as the representative of 98,000 people.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I'd like to thank the member for her question. It's on a very important issue involving seniors and home care access in this province. Dr Naylor was very clear and accurate in his description and accurately reflected the situation we found home care in when we became the government.

We have acted strategically and quickly to resolve this issue and have developed equity funding and, as part of our \$170-million reinvestment into long-term care, we've been able to flow that money and expand the service. I think members of the House would be interested in knowing that where the Liberals spent \$400 million on home care, this government is now spending over \$882 million, including \$1.1 billion in services.

Mrs Marland: My supplementary is on the same subject. Minister, a month ago you and I met with the

new volunteer board of the Peel Community Care Access Centre to discuss their business plan and to learn how they would serve the people of my region. Could you tell the House how the new community care access centres will improve the coordination and consistency of care for seniors and people with disabilities across Ontario?

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Oh, come on, Margaret. You can be more creative than that. Blah, blah, blah.

Mrs Marland: I know the member for Nickel Belt is interested in this question also.

Hon Mr Jackson: As I indicated, our government moved strategically and quickly. It was one of the first pieces of health care legislation brought forward by this government to implement accountable, locally governed community care access centres. There are 43 of them. I was in Sudbury on Friday to examine eight of the business plans for all of northern Ontario, and I am pleased to report the progress and the number of seniors and disabled persons who are actually accountable in making these decisions.

I am pleased to report that this is the first government in Ontario's history to bring in a common assessment tool so that seniors in any part of this province will receive equal treatment, equal funding. They deserve to be able to have services that are coordinated in the right place at the right time when they need them. That is what this government is pleased to implement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Motions.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You need unanimous consent for this.

Hon David Johnson: I will seek unanimous consent, although this was put on the order paper.

The Speaker: Well, yes. I had this discussion. This is not a routine motion, so we need unanimous consent.

Hon David Johnson: Is there consent that I be allowed to present this motion?

The Speaker: So that we know what you're talking about, the government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put this motion on the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon David Johnson: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

That an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Thomas Wright, current interim Information and Privacy Commissioner,

to act as interim Information and Privacy Commissioner until May 31, 1997,

"And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker."

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Debate.

The Speaker: Oh, yes, there's always debate. Okay, debate then. Who's up to debate? The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): While the discussion is going on, I will have a very brief comment. I don't want to panic the Government House Leader right now.

I simply want to say that the commissioner has done an outstanding job in many cases he has dealt with. Particularly, I want to mention Bill 26. The present commissioner has done an outstanding job on that. His opinion was very helpful to members of the Legislature as we endeavoured to deal with Bill 26 and the ramifications of some of the provisions, particularly the medical provisions that relate to Bill 26.

We, of course, would be happy to see Commissioner Wright carry on because of the manner in which he has dealt with his responsibilities as privacy commissioner. As all members know, this is an extremely important position in this province, a person who must be seen to be and actually be above any partisan considerations. Mr Wright has certainly lived up to that obligation. Sometimes we in the opposition have been pleased with his rulings and sometimes we have not been as pleased with his rulings. That usually means he is doing a good job.

It's similar to the job of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, where from time to time the opposition may not be in agreement with the ruling made by a Speaker, and at other times the opposition may be fully in agreement with the ruling of the Speaker. The privacy commissioner is a person who because of this important office should be permitted to carry on. We understand the government must legally have the commissioner carry on, and indeed it is our intention to see this happen. We will be in favour of this motion.

1530

The Speaker: Questions or comments? None? Further debate.

Ms Lankin: I want to assure the government House leader that I will not prolong this. I appreciate the member for St Catharines and the contribution he made, the comments he made. It actually also allowed for discussion to take place about the rest of the business for the day, so that was helpful.

At this point in time I will say that we will be supporting this, although we think there are some significant problems in continued extensions of appointments. It is another case of mismanagement on the part of the government with respect to these appointments, but we will be supporting the motion that has been put forward today.

The Speaker: Further debate? No. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motions. A government motion?

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, I'll give it a shot anyway. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the interim supply motion.

The Speaker: Agreed? No, I heard a no.

PETITIONS

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would like to read the following petition:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to the grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn over the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws which provide true protection for tenants in place."

Most of these people come from the area of 565 Sherbourne, and I affix my name to the petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition to present on behalf of my colleague the honourable Noble Villeneuve, the member for S-D-G & East Grenville, which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. As per the standing orders, I will summarize its contents. It is with respect to the restructuring of the provincial-municipal relationship and on the critical areas of social services, welfare, long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill, and reads as follows in the final part:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition in regard to the current child care crisis in Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important, fundamental right for many members of our community, who are either unemployed and enrolled in a training program or are working single parents, or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas, if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers,

"We, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

I'm signing my signature to this document.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm pleased to present a petition regarding the termination of government funding to the Brock youth resource centre. There are approximately 60 pages of signatures, and this petition calls on the government to provide the youth of Barrie with the same community youth support services that are being provided to the youth of Hamilton. I affix my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government is proposing to completely change the structure of relations between the province and municipalities without any public consultation with Ontarians; and

"Whereas the restructuring proposes to download on to municipalities the cost of public transportation and essential social services like welfare and long-term care for seniors and people with chronic illness; and

"Whereas the restructuring takes away the power to levy tax on school boards and subsequently any real power over their schools and curricula; and

"Whereas the actions of the government are not respecting the promise to keep funding at an actual level and don't recognize that different communities don't have the same resources to absorb these new burdens and that it is creating some inequity in access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government does not show any interest in consultation of the population and it does not take into account the reaction of the population, it represents a threat to democracy; and

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, are hereby expressing non-confidence against the government of the province of Ontario because we are concerned with the inequities of the life of the province and the wellbeing of the children, neighbours and communities."

I have affixed my signature, and there are 42 signatures.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, and petitions signed by thousands of auto workers from the Windsor and Oshawa area. The petitions read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues in the NDP, I add my name to theirs.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I have a petition pertaining to Bill 84, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, signed by approximately 113 of my constituents from Jacksons Point, Pefferlaw, Cannington, Sunderland, Keswick, Sutton, Baldwin and East Gwillimbury. It appears to be in the standard form, and I am submitting it on their behalf today.

1540

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Teamsters Local 879 in my home town of Hamilton, Local 105 of IBEW from across the province, as well as other workers in St Catharines, Guelph and Windsor. The petitions read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition "Re Proposed Social Work Act in Ontario," signed by about 25 people, two of whom are constituents.

"We, the undersigned, are concerned about the exclusionary intentions of the Ontario College of Certified Social Workers to regulate the delivery of social work in Ontario. It is imperative that graduates of social service worker programs are included in the proposed Social Work Act. More than 50% of practising social workers in Ontario are graduates of community college SSW programs. Any legislation must include the regulation of social service workers and their clients in order to realistically reflect the services provided in our communities."

I'm submitting it on their behalf.

TUITION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent to me by Claudio Monteleone, a student at Lakehead University, who is very concerned about the increased tuition fees and has started a petition campaign, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary educational costs have been increasing due to economic and technological changes;

"Whereas student tuition fees have increased greatly over the past few years;

"Whereas the cost of living for students continues to increase;

"Whereas students are unable to continue their education due to high costs;

"Whereas future economic growth depends on access to post-secondary education;

"Whereas the panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recognized the inadequacy in financial resources available to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to renew its financial commitment for post-secondary education and to recognize that a multi-year commitment to the restoration of support must be guaranteed."

I'm pleased to sign my name along with this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me from the Service Employees International Union, Locals 183 and 663 in Belleville, as well as petitions sent to me by Margaret Nelson, who is a steward with OPSEU Local 479 in Ottawa. These petitions are signed by workers in the Kingston area as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario.

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left.

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse" unsafe work.

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders" —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Is that twice in the same day?

Mr Baird: I have not presented this petition in some weeks. You should listen to the previous petitions I've read.

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation," the Marland bill, "that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in the province of Ontario."

It's signed by 17 constituents from Nepean, North Gower and Rideau township and I have affixed my signature too.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that

reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

In light of the Windsor situation, I affix my signature.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I beg leave to present the 37th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Blah, blah.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Does the Chair of the committee wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Laughren: I wasn't going to until I was provoked by the member for High Park-Swansea.

Mr Shea: I want rebuttal time.

Mr Laughren: This is simply a report of the meeting that was held this morning.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 106(g)(11), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EXPANDED NURSING SERVICES FOR PATIENTS ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR L'EXTENSION DES SERVICES INFIRMIERS À L'INTENTION DES PATIENTS

Mr Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to amend the Nursing Act, 1991 and to make consequential amendments to the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act, the Medical Laboratory Technology Act, 1991, the Respiratory Therapy Act, 1991 and the Vital Statistics Act / Projet de loi 127, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les infirmières et infirmiers et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur la protection contre les rayons X, à la technologistes de laboratoire médical, à la Loi de 1991 sur les inhalothérapeutes et à la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The short title of this act is the Expanded Nursing Services for Patients Act. The bill provides the legislative framework required to allow nurse practitioners to provide an expanded range of front-line patient services to the people of Ontario. As members of a multidisciplinary health team, nurse practitioners will work closely with family physicians and other health professionals to improve access to primary care services across the province with particular benefit to patients in rural and northern Ontario.

Research has shown that nurse practitioners provide improved access to safe and effective health care that results in fewer hospitalizations, and as such, they

represent a key element of the future of health care in our province.

For these reasons I hope this legislation receives all-party support through each stage of its process in this House.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for interim supply for the period commencing May 1, 1997, and ending October 31, 1997.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I see by the clock that I have a little over five minutes left to debate interim supply, which is not a lot of time, given the importance of this particular motion.

Yesterday we had a scintillating debate on interim supply, not just because I was involved in it; others were as well. I must say that I was somewhat taken aback to read in here some of the comments of the government House leader and the Chair of Management Board, who expressed some dismay at the undue length of the debate on interim supply. That really did surprise me because my memory flashed back — every now and again I still have my memory — and I remembered that back in 1994, guess who held up interim supply for three days of debate?

At that point the government of the day, namely the New Democrats, was warning the Tories that they'd better get on with the debate because we had to pay the salaries of the public sector in the province. Here we have, yesterday and today, the government House leader predicting all sorts of catastrophes because of the NDP debating two days on interim supply.

I must say that if we were able to get the cheques out in 1994, what's so incompetent about this government that they can't get the cheques out in 1997? I haven't come to a conclusion on that, but perhaps the Chair of Management Board could explain that to us. Perhaps the Chair of Management Board as well, when he's responding to the civil servants in this province who are worried about getting their cheques on time, could explain to them in a most forthright manner how a week ago today he bungled his assignment when he didn't get the notice of motion tabled by 5 o'clock that afternoon, which he was supposed to do in order to have the debate occur on Thursday. He didn't do that. He bungled it. The opposition then said to him last Thursday: "Look, we know you're concerned about this. Why don't we start the debate tomorrow with unanimous consent?" "Oh no," said the Chair of Management Board, "I'm not going to do that unless you guarantee me there'll only be one day's debate." The opposition said: "Take a hike. What kind of deal is that?"

So what did the Chair of Management Board do? The Chair of Management Board, listening to the pointy heads around the Premier's office, I guess, said: "Well, no, we won't make that deal. We'll call the bill on Monday and then we'll have two or three days of debate." The logic

that lay behind that decision by the Chair of Management Board escapes me, and I find it passing strange that he would do that. I'm simply saying that I hope the Chair of Management Board and the government House leader, when he's responding to concerns of civil servants in this province, will tell them that he's the reason there's a delay, not the opposition. It's his problem. He's the one who bungled his assignment to call it last Thursday.

I would simply say that the civil servants in this province will be paid, and unless the government is inefficient, they'll get paid on time. I don't think that the House leader should get his britches in a knot simply because the opposition is doing to him what he did to us when he was in opposition. I think that simply needs to be said from time to time.

I have no intention of prolonging the debate. I have no idea how many official opposition members still want to speak on this, or my colleagues, for that matter. They may want to engage in this important debate, because as I said yesterday, when you polarize a province, you can expect to polarize debate on interim supply. That's the way it should be.

This caucus makes no apology for having a good debate on interim supply. It's important that we do that. As you know, there are no restrictions on what goes into the debate on supply motions. There's a long tradition of that. I would simply say to the members of the government that we want to get on with the business of this province and every now and again I get a little tired of the filibustering tactics of the government.

I would simply say to the government members that before they get angry at us, they should go and have a talk with their House leader and their Chair of Management Board because therein lies the problem, not in the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I just wanted to say that the former finance minister, as always, speaks eloquently and passionately about the polarization of this province. Even here in the House today the government doesn't know if it's going to call WCB or rent control, can't figure it out. It's now 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We haven't figured that out. Whom are we going to go after today? Are we going to give a chance for there to be full debate? No, we're not, we're just going to barrel ahead. When you barrel ahead like that, you get a reaction. The reaction you're going to get is going to be a strong reaction. It's going to come from the opposition benches of the House, but more important, it's going to come from every corner of this province, and the reaction is going to be enough.

When we debate public issues, we should debate them properly and fully. We may differ in our opinions, but when it comes to matters as essential to the operation of the government as supply, they should be dealt with properly. You can't have it both ways. You can't just debate what you want to debate and not the important issues the rest of us want to debate. The back bench on the government side knows that. They understand that. My friend from Nepean is hearing all the time about the polarization. He doesn't get it.

When the member for Nickel Belt, the esteemed former finance minister, speaks about polarization — he knows about polarization; he was pretty good at it himself — the words should be taken seriously because ultimately the polarization will be resolved at the next election and it won't be resolved in favour of the government.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of the member for Nickel Belt. Members of this House will know that not only is the member for Nickel Belt a well-respected and regarded parliamentarian, but he also happens to be the dean of this House. He has been here longer than anyone else in this Legislature. So when he talks about understanding how this place works and what the traditions are and what happens when there's a polarization, the government backbenchers should pay heed because the member knows of what he speaks.

He talked about the last Parliament and talked about what the Tories, who were then the third party, were doing in the House during our term in government. I was there also and I can recall the reading of the lakes and the streams and the rivers, and the refusal of their government House leader to enter into any kind of agreement around legislation so that this place could work effectively. So yes, we get very incensed when this government suggests that somehow we're being unfair or being undemocratic or not following the traditions of this place. The member for Nickel Belt points out that we have lived under the way the Tories think this place should work when they were opposition, but when they're government suddenly they want it all different. That's not the way this place operates.

Interim supply is an opportunity for all of us to talk about the large picture, the overall agenda of the government, and that is indeed what we do. This government I suspect wanted to play games and wanted to shorten that time, and that's why they waited so long. This is their problem, their fault, and it's also their history coming back to haunt them. The member for Nickel Belt was pointing that out, and rightly he should.

1600

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I want to comment on the speech from the member across the way. I just want to talk about polarization for a minute. I think we all agree that we see things in very different lights. When I came to this House, I saw that the province was \$100 billion in debt and the debt was continuing to grow and no one was taking management of the system. What has happened along the line is that previous governments, probably because of economic changes, have mortgaged the children of today and the children of tomorrow.

We need to bring management to the system in Ontario. We need to bring management to the government of Ontario. This government has done that. Certainly we bring change about quickly, but I have to say that change has to come quickly in the province because our financial situation is in disarray. We have to bring change quickly to the situation in Ontario because health care is growing so quickly, demographics are changing so fast that we have to make changes to get dollars focused on the areas we need to have them focused on. We need to have a different health care system that meets our needs.

Yes, I am a polar opposite from the previous government. I believe the things they did, spending their way out of what they believed was a recession at the time, continuing to spend at the expense of my children and the children of tomorrow, was the wrong way to go. I am proud to say that I think we're doing the right things. I think we're moving to a financially responsible government, I believe we're allocating moneys to the areas they need to be allocated to, and I think in the long run, at the next election, the people of Ontario will say thank you to us because we've made some important changes in the direction of the province to ensure that it's financially sound and equitable to all people.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): There are a couple of comments I want to make. First of all, the member for Huron has put her finger right on it: This province is getting into a worse and worse financial mess because of the actions your government has taken. She's quite correct that when they started we were in debt to the tune of \$100 billion; today we are closer to about \$120 billion.

What makes it even worse, Mr Speaker — you and I know this — is the fact that next week they're going to implement the last part of the big tax cut, which is going to cost the taxpayers of this province \$5 billion. If you want to be consistent and get rid of the debt and the annual deficit as quickly as possible, why don't you forget about your tax cut? Go and have a conversation with the Minister of Finance and say: "It doesn't make any sense. We cannot possibly give a tax cut to the people of Ontario before we have our budget balanced in a particular year." That's the first point.

The second point is this interim supply motion. I'm somewhat aghast that the government House leader would stand in the House here today and accuse the opposition of not allowing the government to pay its bills because we are somehow holding up the process. Surely to goodness he should have brought the interim supply motion forward about a week or two ago. There could have been ample debate on it; we've only had two days of debate on this motion.

For him now to suggest that the opposition is holding up the government from paying its actual debts, its employees, its suppliers etc is absolute nonsense. The government should get its act together, should bring in a plan whereby we know what the legislative schedule is going to be. The member for Windsor-Walkerville is quite correct: We don't know what is going to be called next. That is the disarray we find ourselves in, and it's all the government's fault.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Laughren: I thought this supply debate would be over by now, but the government members seem to want to prolong it with their interjections.

The member for Huron talks about the previous government and what it did to her children. I want to tell you that what her government is doing will do more harm to children in five years than any other government has done in the history of this province. The member for Huron can stand up and say all she likes about the previous government; that's fine. I notice she didn't

bother dealing with what her government is doing to the educational system, which is going to have a serious impact on the children of this province.

I would say as well that the member for Huron says they're putting the money into where the priorities should be. I'm glad to know that the member for Huron has decided that \$3 million on the Premier's new office is an important priority for her government, more important than the education of our children, more important than the preservation of the health care system. If that's the kind of debate the member for Huron wants to get into, that's fine; we're happy to engage in that kind of debate.

But for her to stand in her place and say that the previous government did things that were harmful to children in this province when I think of what you've done to women and children in this province, such as cancelling the second-stage housing, when I think of what you've done to the educational system, to child care, you have got more nerve than a canal horse when you say that we did damage to children. Your government is the one that's done the damage to children.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Eves moved that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1997, and ending October 31, 1997, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA LOI SUR LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other acts / *Projet de loi 99, Loi assurant la stabilité financière du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs blessés, favorisant la prévention des lésions et des maladies dans les lieux de travail en Ontario et révisant la Loi sur les accidents du travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to continue my remarks on the second reading of Bill 99. I believe I ended my comments last week speaking to the issue of the unfunded liability and the fact that this government, à la the education minister's style, continues to say that there is a crisis in the unfunded liability and therefore that somehow justifies taking \$15 billion out of the pockets of injured workers and giving \$6 billion of that money taken from the pockets of injured workers to their corporate friends, the very people who owe that unfunded liability.

As I mentioned last time, that fund is not taxpayer-funded; it's paid by employers. It's their part of the

historic compromise that was made in 1914 whereby workers gave up the right to sue employers for injuries on the job through the justice system, in the courts of our province. Workers gave up that right. They gave it up because the other half of the deal was that employers would pay the premiums necessary to fund the WCB so that workers would have money available, without having to sue, to pay their lost wages and benefits when they're injured on the job through no fault of their own. That's the reality of what the unfunded liability is.

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Further, the government says it's in such a crisis that it's necessary to take this money from injured workers, again totally ignoring the fact that there is almost \$9 billion in assets in the WCB. They have almost \$9 billion invested, generating money, making money for that fund. But this government chooses to ignore that and says to its corporate friends: "Hey, if we get elected, we're going to create this phoney crisis around the unfunded liability, and that will let us take money from injured workers, and guess what? We're going to give you a 5% reduction in the premiums you pay."

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): That's not true.

Mr Christopherson: One of the ministers says that's not true. It does happen to be true. You've already done it. You've already passed the regulation. As of January 1 of this year, you've already implemented the 5% cut in the premiums paid by employers. That's the truth. That's why I was so incensed the other day when the minister was blathering on about what they're doing to WCB. The fact is that they are hurting injured workers and giving the people who have an obligation to pay the WCB a gift of \$6 billion that belongs to those injured workers. The premiums that those corporations pay as part of the deal has now been reduced.

I think it's fair for any worker, injured or healthy, in the province of Ontario to ask, if the unfunded liability is such a crisis that somehow that justifies what I would call stealing, but anyway, taking money from injured workers, why would they cut the premiums that employers pay into the unfunded liability, into the WCB? Why would they do that? It doesn't make sense. If you've got this huge crisis of money that's owed, why would you turn to the people who had the obligation to pay the premiums on that fund and give them a 5% reduction? Why would you do that?

You do it because you're paying off your political pals. What is so disgusting is that you're paying off your political pals at the expense of injured workers. You're cutting the money that injured workers get. You've cut by 5% the premiums being paid and you're cutting the amount of money that injured workers get by 5%. A 5% gift to your corporate friends, your political pals, and the injured workers have the amount of money they collect reduced by 5%.

And you have the audacity to stand here in this place and say you're making it better. It makes as much sense as cutting \$1 billion from the education system because you want to make it better, and you think that's such a great idea you want to take another billion dollars. You made it so good, you want to make it even better. You really insult the intelligence.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): You think the only way you can make something better is by throwing all kinds of money at it, right?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Kitchener, you're out of order. You're not in your seat. Heckling is out of order and I'd ask you to please come to order.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. They tend to get a little riled when you point out what is truly going on, when you talk very clearly about what this government is doing, without the spin doctoring, without the media releases, without the nice, hollow, wish-washy words of the minister. When you pull all that away and take a look at the stark reality of what's happening, they get upset.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): You touched a nerve.

Mr Christopherson: My colleague from Sault Ste Marie says to me as I speak that we touch a nerve when we do that, and he's right. That's why they get so upset.

So, Speaker, it's quite all right; let them go on cackling and hollering. It just reflects the nervousness they all have about this issue, because they've got to go back to their ridings and explain to injured workers why it's okay to give a 5% cut to their political pals, a gift of \$6 billion, and take away from injured workers their net income when they're injured on the job. They know they can't defend that, so it's natural they would react the way they're reacting here.

When we talk about the unfunded liability and point this out, we need to remind people that this is not a taxpayer debt; this is not a taxpayer-funded account. It's all paid and owed by the corporations who benefit from the fact that none of their employees can take them to court, not a one. No matter what, workers can't take those employers to court. Wouldn't it really be fair if we set about to improve the WCB in a serious way, rather than attacking injured workers, which is exactly what they're doing?

When we talk about the changes they're making, the \$15 billion this government is taking from injured workers, when we talk about that, this government likes to say, "We're just following the course the previous government, those NDPers, already started." They like to talk about that. Well, we like to talk about that too. I want to talk about what we did with our reform of the WCB.

First of all, on the broader picture, we had a royal commission looking into those things that required an in-depth analysis, because there are problems with the WCB. No one has suggested that there aren't. But the fact is that we said, "Here are some changes we're making in our legislation, and for those things that are not looked at or which require more time, we're going to strike up a royal commission." That's what we did. This government killed the royal commission, handed the whole thing over to junior minister Jackson, who took the whole thing and went underground. That's the process they followed.

What exactly did we do in our legislation? One of the things we did was put in place funding that allowed that unfunded liability to be dealt with in a proper, orderly

fashion. In fact, in the three years since we brought in our WCB reform, the unfunded liability has dropped every one of those years, for a total of \$1.1 billion. That's how much lower the unfunded liability is as a result of our changes. Last year it was \$500 million. We hear reports it's going to be close to that this year, and it was over \$100 million in the first year after the WCB reform. That's what we did.

What else did we do? One thing we didn't do was give any money back to the people who owe that unfunded liability. We increased the amount of money that went to the most vulnerable of those injured workers to the tune of almost \$200 a month — increased almost \$200 a month. You're taking money away; we gave more money to injured workers. We were taking care of injured workers; you're just taking care of your corporate pals.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Tell the truth.

Mr Christopherson: Some 45,000 injured workers who are so severely disabled that they either aren't for sure or aren't likely to ever be gainfully employed again for the rest of their lives because of an injury on the job, through no fault of their own, are now, all of those 45,000, receiving up to \$200 a month more.

Tell me one thing you've done in Bill 99 that makes it better for injured workers. You've taken money out of their pockets. You've denied them the future they're entitled to in terms of the money that's being put into their pensions. You've cut that by 50%.

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Who does benefit? Your political pals are doing okay. They got that 5% cut in premiums, and let's remember, that's already in place. That was done by regulation, already done. On January 1 of this year they started to get their benefit, they started to get their political payback for helping get this government elected, and injured workers are paying the price.

As to the process, this government didn't consult with anyone. They like to say there was an election two years ago and that ends all consultation, that everything after that is just a matter of formula, that it's just public relations. The fact of the matter is you didn't discuss with anyone except your corporate pals what's going to happen in Bill 99. We had a lengthy negotiation, an actual negotiation. Everybody got their say. At the end of it, was everybody happy? No. That's governing. You're never going to please everyone all the time, that's understood. But at the end of the day the Ontario Federation of Labour felt the improvements we were offering were important enough for them to endorse.

I don't know of a single labour leader in this province who says that Bill 99 is anything other than an attack on injured workers and a denial of their rights — every labour leader in the province. Those same labour leaders said at the time that the reforms we made, although not perfect and didn't give them everything they wanted, were definitely an improvement for injured workers. That's a far cry from what this government is doing and who they're taking care of.

When the government talks to us about what we did, we'll gladly, any day of the week, compare what we did with workers' compensation and what you are doing in

terms of how it affects injured workers. Any day of the week we'll compare that.

What exactly are they doing? As I mentioned, in addition to giving their friends a 5% gift of \$6 billion that the injured workers are paying for, they're taking 5% away from injured workers. Currently under WCB injured workers receive 90% of their net pay. This government is reducing that to 85%. They're taking 5% away from injured workers.

Bill 99 is here in this House just two days after the national day of mourning, where all the parties got up and said how important health and safety is and how much we owe to workers who have died on the job, and that we need to commit ourselves to making workplaces as safe as we can and to taking care of injured workers. Just two days after that we're here resuming debate on a piece of legislation that takes 5% of the income of injured workers right out of their pockets and puts it right into the pockets of their corporate pals. That's what's going on. Unbelievable.

In terms of pensions, what is this government doing for pensions for injured workers? We know that 45,000 of those most vulnerable, most severely injured workers received almost \$200 a month more, with inflation guaranteed for life by our government. What's this government doing? They are reducing by 50% the amount of money the WCB sets aside for pensions of injured workers, workers who reach 65, having been on WCB for years and years, entitled to a pension just like everyone else in this province, and this government in Bill 99 is taking away by 50% the amount of money set aside for those long-term injured workers. How disgraceful.

What else are they doing? They talk about trying to improve WCB and that they care about the workplace, and the minister consistently stands in her place and says, "We want the safest workplaces in the world." What's the reality? The reality is that in Bill 99 this government is abolishing the Occupational Disease Panel. Gone. Killing it.

What does the Occupational Disease Panel do? I see the member for Hamilton Mountain is here. He should ask the steelworkers in Hamilton what that panel does, because steelworkers can tell you and auto workers can tell you very directly that this panel provides independent, arm's-length, non-political evaluation of workplace illness and disease. They study it from a medical and scientific perspective. They look at it, analyse it and determine if there's a causal link between what's happening in the workplace, exposure of workers to substances, and diseases that workers are getting.

As I mentioned in the House the other day, there was a study not long ago that said up to 6,000 workers a year die as a result of workplace illness and disease. This panel allows us, as a society, to make an objective determination whether or not there's a causal link between what's happening in a workplace and the fact that workers are dying of diseases.

That's valuable information. That's a powerful tool if we're serious about making workplaces safe, really safe, the safest they can be, as the minister likes to say. This is a powerful tool to do that because it allows us to

identify workers who are entitled to prove their entitlement to WCB claims so they can receive the income they're entitled to as a result of the deal made in 1914. Remember that? It not only allows us, as a society, to determine eligibility and entitlement to that WCB because we've been able to prove that their illness and their disease is directly related to what's happening in the workplace, but the second thing it does is that it allows us, as a society, to say: "Okay, we've now proven there's a direct causal link here. How do we prevent other workers from becoming diseased and dying of illness?"

There are employers who do care; not enough, and a lot of them don't care enough, but those who do find this information valuable because it allows them to go in with the union, with the workers to determine: "How do we prevent this from happening again? We now know there is a cause, we now know there's a direct link, we know what the exposure is. How do we prevent other innocent workers from being exposed and also dying? How do we prevent that?" That's what this panel does.

They're killing it. At the same time that they're taking money out of the pockets of injured workers, that they're cutting the amount of money available for the pensions of injured workers, they're killing a panel that plays a vital role in preventing workplace accidents, illness and disease. That's the hypocrisy we have so much difficulty accepting in this place around Bill 99.

It's not just us in the NDP saying that, and it's not just labour leaders; when word got out that this government wanted to kill the Occupational Disease Panel, we started to hear from people all over the world.

I have a letter from the department of work environment, the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. In part, this letter, which is signed by a dozen professors and associate professors — no link to politics. These are academics. What they care about is workplace health and safety from a medical perspective. This is what they do. What do they say? Well, on October 9 of last year when word got out that killing the panel was part of Bill 99, they wrote a letter to the Minister of Labour and they said to her, in part:

"We recently heard that the province of Ontario is planning to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel in the near future. We urge you to reconsider this decision. Several of us have worked with the panel over the years and have always been impressed at the extremely thorough and rigorous way they have approached the difficult and often contentious task of determining the work-relatedness of disease.... Indeed, the Ontario workers' compensation system has been described as a model for how scientific research can be successfully used in the development of occupational health policy."

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They close their letter to the minister by saying, "We hope you will reconsider your decision and maintain this highly regarded and valuable institution." That's what they said.

They're not the only ones. I have another copy of a letter from the University of Maryland, the school of medicine, an occupational health project. They say, in part, in a letter sent September 23 of last year:

"I am well acquainted with and have been impressed by the work of the Occupational Disease Panel. Its

tripartite approach to occupational health problem-solving, which includes employers, labour and government, is demonstrated to be effective and is one that is modelled throughout the world." That's the panel they want to kill.

This associate professor, Melissa McDiarmid, closes the letter by saying: "I therefore urge you to rethink and in fact rescind plans to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel. Failure to keep the Occupational Disease Panel's doors open will be seen as a clear and deliberate step backwards in the eyes of the public health community worldwide."

Worldwide. No politics. No friends. No payback. This is strictly an objective analysis by people outside this country, not just outside the province, as to the importance of the Occupational Disease Panel, and you're killing it. You're killing it, and you somehow expect workers to believe this is in their best interests.

I'll tell you whose interest it's in. I have another letter, July 4, 1995. That would be, what, a month after you got elected? A month after you got elected you received a letter from the Ontario Mining Association. They asked you to do six things.

They wanted you to repeal Bill 40 Labour Relations Act amendments. You did that. That's one for one.

Dismantling of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency: You did that. They got two of the things they wanted.

Amending the Workers' Compensation Act: Getting that today.

Cancelling the WCB royal commission: You did that.

Restructuring all bipartite processes; for example, the Joint Steering Committee on Hazardous Substances in the Workplace. Done.

Lastly, what do they want, the Ontario Mining Association in their letter of July 1995, one month after you took power? What's the last thing on their list that they want? Dismantling of the Occupational Disease Panel.

There you go: Six for six. Workers: Zero, zero, zero. Every time you touch labour legislation, workers lose, your friends win. You cannot justify dismantling the Occupational Disease Panel. It can't be done. The only reason you're doing it is to take care of your corporate pals.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): If you wouldn't talk so loud —

Mr Christopherson: I'll talk louder than this if you continue to do what you're doing to workers.

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm not sure whether the sound system is working or functioning properly in the House, because I can hear the member screaming. I'm just wondering if this —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener-Wilmot, that is not a point of order. The sound system is working, and you know that is not a point of order.

Mr Leadston: I thought perhaps it wasn't because —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener-Wilmot, take your seat. That is not a point of order. Could you continue, member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Christopherson: That member is obviously serving the injured workers in his community really well,

because he doesn't want us to speak out; he wants things nice and easy. It was like when I was talking about scabs the other day. One of them popped up and said: "I don't like that word. You should use 'replacement workers.'" That's what you want: You want everything nice and civil. It's not very civil for injured workers.

If you think I'm screaming loud, come on out to some meetings of injured workers; I'll show you screaming. I invite you and every other member of the Tory caucus to come on out to a meeting of injured workers. They'll tell you what they think about Bill 99. For those of you lucky enough to win the draw, who are going to be on the committee when we take this out in the province this summer, you'll know what I'm talking about and you'll know screaming. But unfortunately you'll also know tears and you'll know about pain and you'll know about hurt, and you'll get a real lesson in fairness, because it's not fair that your political friends can write you a letter a month after you're elected and ask for six things and they get all six and workers and injured workers get the dirty end of the stick every time.

Every time you've touched labour legislation, workers lose more rights. That has been your agenda from the beginning, and it will continue. This isn't the end of it, I'm sorry to say, because you're still looking at the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Do you honestly believe that there's an injured worker out there, or a healthy worker, who believes you're going to suddenly see the light and make things better by improving the Occupational Health and Safety Act? No. They know what you did to the Ontario Labour Relations Act in terms of the rights you took away. They know the rights you took away when you attacked the employment standards legislation in this province. They saw what you did. They've seen what you've shut down, money that you've cut back, training staff in health and safety that had to be laid off. They've seen that, and that's not the end of it either.

You're also going for a second whack at the Employment Standards Act. You'll take more rights away then, because that's all you plan to do. You've attacked our environmental protection to take care of your friends at the expense of all. You talk about kids; you talk about grandchildren. What you've done to the environmental protection in this province is a disgrace. It is our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will pay the price. You've done that in the education system. That's a crisis. It's the kids who are going to pay. The health system is under the knife.

Under this, more injured workers will be hurt on the job and more injured workers will die on the job because of the actions you're taking. You cannot defend eliminating the Occupational Disease Panel as part of Bill 99 and say that somehow you're making things better for workers; it can't be done. Each of you in the House today is going to have to go back to your riding — you can hide for a while, but they'll find you eventually — and you're going to have to explain to those injured workers, and those healthy workers who are worried about being victims of accidents and disease on the job, why Bill 99 was something you stood up and voted for.

If any of you have any brains at all, you'll find a way to be away that day, because you're going to have to defend the fact that you stood up in this place and gave the power to the Minister of Labour and the Premier to put Bill 99 into the law books, a law that takes away from injured workers and hurts injured workers and gives your friends — maybe not your personal friends, but sure enough the friends of some of your cabinet ministers — a \$6-billion gift. That's what you're doing. You're going to have to defend that. Good luck. You're going to need it.

What else are they doing? They're not done. That's not it; there's more. Let's remember, this is not just a few amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act; this is a whole new act, just like you did with the Ontario Labour Relations Act, a whole new act.

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One of the things you're going to do is limit the independence of WCAT, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. What is that? Very simply, that is a panel that allows injured workers to say: "The board has made a mistake in denying me my claim. I wish to appeal it. I have more information. I am now able to refute legally and properly the arguments made by the company or point out where the board was in error." They can take this case to WCAT, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

What has worked so well for injured workers — because part of the WCB does work: An awful lot of workers are hurt on the job, they receive their money, they get better and they go back to work; there are far too many where it doesn't work that way, but there are an awful lot where it does. One of the strengths of the system has been the ability of this tribunal to overrule the board. They can even set aside the policy that the board used in making its decision if it can be shown that the specific circumstances around a particular worker's injury justify their receiving money they're owed from the WCB. That's a key function of the WCB.

If you talk to any worker who represents other workers in WCB cases and mention WCAT, many times that's the lifeline, that's the one chance a worker has to receive natural justice, not to be denied by red tape and bureaucracy, all the things that you purport to hate. Those things can be set aside and you can look at the individual circumstances, and that tribunal can say, "We will allow this claim and overrule the board."

That in fact is how we received the first recognition for chronic stress, something you're adding to by the minute, I might add, but that first claim was possible because there was a WCAT case and there was a recognition that the chronic stress claim of this worker was legitimate, that it was clear enough that that was the cause of the illness, and it was granted. You, of course, in addition to everything else I've mentioned, have now outlawed any claims for chronic stress. You got a jump on that one real quick, eh? Can't let that cat get out of the bag. You specifically shut that down.

But with the WCAT itself, you're now denying them the right to go beyond policy, the very thing that made it work for workers. It will be there, and you'll be able to go out in the communities and the minister can stand up and make speeches and say: "WCAT is there. We didn't

dismantle it. It's there." But you've neutralized it in terms of one of its most important functions. They can no longer go beyond policy of the board.

The board, let's remember, the people who make the policy — you changed that law too. It used to be, under the NDP legislation, that workers and their representatives had 50% of the seats on WCB. That does make sense; that does seem fair. Part of our reform was to give workers their equal say. WCB is not there for employers, it's there for injured workers; therefore, it makes sense, we thought when we were in power, that workers ought to have a 50% say in the board that's managing those funds and setting the policies. You killed that too — gone. Bill 15 was rushed through here, and it took away the right of workers to have a 50% say in how the WCB is run.

If we go back to that starting point — because that was your first bill, that was the tee-up, and we said so at the time — what you were planning to do was to get control through your friends, an overwhelming majority say on the board. "Get rid of those nuisance workers. Get them back in their place. Get them out of those board chairs. They don't belong there." That's for your friends, not for workers' friends. We start there, and you overwhelmingly stack it up with people who think and want the same things you do. I think any fairminded person would appreciate that's not necessarily in the workers' best interests, just as the workers' best interests may not be in the corporate best interests, so why not have a 50-50 deal? That does make sense. No, no, you killed that.

So now we've got a board that sets the policy and makes the decisions overwhelmingly represented by one side of the equation, your friends. Then we deny claims that we don't want people getting paid for, like chronic stress. And just to make sure that sort of thing doesn't happen again, you limit the ability of WCAT to overrule board policy. Isn't that a sweet little deal?

Well, it's a sweet little deal if you're one of the ones getting a 5% cut in your premiums, it's a sweet little deal if you're getting \$6 billion, but let me tell you, it ain't so sweet if you're an injured worker. They don't think it's such a sweet deal. They're the ones who have had their paycheques cut. They're the ones who have had their pension cheques cut. They're the ones who have seen the Occupational Disease Panel killed. That's what you're doing, and that's why injured workers and healthy workers and labour leaders and we in the NDP are so incensed. There's no attempt to be fair here. There's no attempt to help workers. You can't justify it.

When people really understand what the unfunded liability is and what it isn't, you've got no excuse — none. Your phoney argument, your phoney crisis, is gone, and it's all laid bare. The only thing that's there is take-away from injured workers and a nice \$6-billion gift for your friends. That's what Bill 99 is. It's an attack on those injured workers, and you'll know that soon enough when you get out into the ridings that you all represent and begin to talk to injured workers about why your government is doing this.

It's sometimes easier to ignore a large crowd of 10,000 or 20,000, because it's so big, it's so impersonal, and you can either cower away in your office or hide in your

home or hide in your riding office. I can't imagine that any of you would be so callous as to be that way, but if you were, that's how you could handle a large crowd.

I would think, speaking to you now, members of the government, as another parliamentarian, as another Ontarian, that where you're going to have the greatest difficulty is when you're dealing with an injured worker or the family members of someone who has died on the job as a result of an injury or an illness in the workplace. When they aren't hollering and fighting but when they're talking to you face to face and some of them begin to cry as they talk about their plight or what life is like without their family member, you're going to have a hell of a difficult time finding in your conscience the fact that voting for Bill 99 was the right thing to do.

1650

And that will happen: You will have to face those people. Let me say to you, if you try to hand them something about unfunded liability, it's not going to work. They're not going to buy it. They'll want to know why you killed that panel. They may not know the name, but they'll say: "That panel was a good thing. Why did you kill that?" Why did you take away 5% of the income of injured workers? Why'd you do that? Why did you cut by 50% the amount of money that goes to an injured worker's pension? Why did you do that? Why did you limit the ability of WCAT to recognize the legitimacy of an injured worker who, through no fault of their own, is now permanently disabled?

If you start talking to them about money, they're very likely to say to you, because working people are an awful lot smarter than you give them credit for, "By not getting WCB, we had to go on welfare." Who pays for welfare? Taxpayers. Who pays for WCB? Employers. All those medical bills are paid by those premiums. If WCB is denied, everybody else has to pay that price. They shouldn't have to.

If you want to talk about unfairness in taxes, if you want to make this strictly an economic issue, if we can't get through to you through your heart and through your conscience, maybe we can through your pocketbook. Every time you deny an injured worker a legitimate WCB claim, you push them on to welfare and all the medical bills are paid by OHIP, which we all pay for. That's not fair. That's not the way it's supposed to be. It means that somebody else had an obligation and they don't have to honour it. You're big on personal responsibility and internal responsibility and all kinds of responsibilities. What about the responsibility of that employer to pay, through the WCB, those medical bills? That worker didn't do anything wrong. They went to work and they got hurt or they got a disease. That's not their fault.

The best we can offer them in that case, in addition to finding out why it happened, which is what the Occupational Disease Panel does, is to do everything we can to make things better for that injured worker, because they didn't do anything wrong.

If one of the members of the government fell, rushing over to kiss the feet of a cabinet minister, they would be covered, and we would all say, "We've got to make sure they're okay," because it's a fellow citizen, it's a fellow worker. That's all we're talking about here. When you

deny that injured worker their legitimate claim, everybody else has to pay the medical bill, everybody else has to pay.

Suddenly, someone who had a great deal of pride in their work and pride in themselves, who did a good job, somebody maybe in the prime of their life, taking care of family, a good citizen, a good neighbour, went to work one morning and got injured on the job through no fault of their own, or maybe, after years and years and years of exposure to a particular substance, now they've got cancer. The Occupational Disease Panel was able to say: "Yes, there's a direct link. That's why you have the cancer."

The system is supposed to be that those workers are taken care of in a respectful, dignified way. The actions you're taking are going to have some of those workers end up on welfare. They didn't do anything wrong. Why did you push them into poverty? Why did you make all their neighbours and everybody else pay their medical bills? They didn't do anything wrong.

If they did anything wrong, I would suggest to you it was in being conned into your spin-doctor, bumper-sticker slogans and giving you enough members that you had the ability to ram through a bill as awful and as hurtful as Bill 99. If they did anything wrong, it was being sucked in by your stories and your words and your slogans that everybody else is to blame: "Don't worry, we'll only go after those bad people, the wrong people. You'll be okay."

If that injured worker voted for you — and unfortunately, an awful lot of working people did, much to their chagrin, much to their horror when they see what you're doing — they're now saying to themselves, "Why did you do this to me?" I suspect that question will turn very quickly to anger when they realize and when they're told, "Not only do you not qualify for a legitimate claim," because if you have chronic stress it doesn't count any more, and "If you don't fit exactly into the policy, WCAT's not there to help you any more either." They're going to come to realize that somebody else got \$6 billion more — a gift. Bill 99 puts in place the measures necessary to take that \$6 billion out of an injured worker's pocket and give it to the corporate entities that owed those premiums.

Can you imagine how angry that injured worker is going to be? Can you imagine how angry you would be if the system did that to a family member of yours? For some of you, maybe none of this matters. Maybe it's so far unrelated to what your life is like or your life experience is that none of this matters. But for an awful lot of workers, this matters a great deal.

You cannot justify in any way what you're doing. That unfunded liability is not owed by taxpayers. They've never borrowed a dime. They've got almost \$9 billion in assets. The unfunded liability has dropped the last three years in a row under our NDP reform. It's \$1 billion less than it was. There's no need to do this. The only reason you're doing this is to give your corporate pals that \$6-billion gift.

Where have we heard that before? Where have we heard the idea that this government takes away from the most vulnerable and gives to those who already have? Let

us think. What else do we know that sounds like that? Gee, that sounds an awful lot like your 30% tax cut. You know, the one where you had to attack our education system, where you had to take 22% of the income out of the pockets of the poorest of the poor, a 22% cut. You know what would happen if Harris walked into your caucus room and said, "I'm going to cut your MPP pay by 22%?" They'd have to peel you off the ceiling. But it's okay to do it to poor people. That's okay, you can do that to poor people. You put a label on them that they're special interests and they're bad people — it's their fault they're poor — so it's okay to cut their income by 22%.

It's okay to cut our education system by \$1 billion and plan to take another \$1 billion, because most of the people you're worried about have got enough money to send their kids to private school, so we don't need to worry about the public education system. The same applies to the health care system. While you're doing all that, the 30% tax cut is between \$5 billion and \$6 billion, again going to those who have the most.

I ask people when I'm speaking out across the province, I ask them publicly at meetings: "How much has the tax cut helped your life? How much has the part of that 30% tax cut that they've already implemented helped you spend money to create jobs?" — that whole mythical economic BS story you use to try to justify. I'll tell you, if you're making \$1 million or half a million dollars, that's a lot of coin. Now we're talking serious money. That's a new car, at least. That's another piece of the portfolio. That's another world vacation. That's serious money.

That's exactly the same as what you're doing to injured workers. You're taking from those who are the most vulnerable, who have the least — in this case it's injured workers, for God's sake; you're taking the money out of their pockets and giving it to those who already have, just like you're doing with the 30% tax cut.

1700

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Let me tell you very directly, for those of you who don't like to be yelled at about Bill 99, for those of you who don't want the truth told about Bill 99, you'd better stay away from the public hearings this summer, because there's going to be a lot of yelling going on.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order, the member for Lambton, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Christopherson: There's going to be a lot of yelling, there's going to be a lot of screaming, there's going to be a lot of hurt people. Those of you who are on that committee are going to have to sit through that, and if you remember what we went through with the Employment Standards Act — remember that bill that was supposed to be just a little housekeeping bill, minor amendments, and then when we forced you to take it out publicly across the province, you got savaged in every community because you were taking away rights?

Let me tell you, that was a picnic compared to what's going to happen when Bill 99, assuming the minister honours her commitment to have province-wide public

hearings; that was a picnic compared to what you're going to face on Bill 99. It won't be political rhetoric; it will be about the most vulnerable people in our society being hurt by you again. That's what it will be about. Every time you say "unfunded liability," they're going to say "workers' rights"; every time you say "unfunded liability," they're going to say "\$6 billion for your corporate friends"; and every time you try to justify why it's okay to kill the Occupational Disease Panel, they're going to say, "That's not true."

There's no justification for what you're doing, there's no justification for any of the changes and the attacks that exist within Bill 99. Let me say to you that, although you have a majority and you will probably at the end of the day have your way, it won't be without one hell of a fight in every corner of this province, as injured workers take the one opportunity they have to get at you in public meetings and tell you what they think of your attack on their lives and your attack on their loved ones and your attack on their neighbours, because that's what this is, and you're going to be held accountable. You'll be held accountable at re-election time, because you cannot justify the continual attack on vulnerable people in this province in every area. You can't continue to do that without hearing the kind of fight you're going to hear on Bill 99.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I think it's important that we put some facts on the record and it's important that if we take a look at Bill 165, which was introduced by the NDP, Premier Bob Rae indicated that there was a need for reform and renewal of workers' comp. Then he proceeded to indicate that he was taking \$18 billion in benefits away from injured workers through the reforms he was introducing. He also recognized the need to retire the unfunded liability over time, and that's why they introduced the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation.

But I think what is most revealing is the fact that labour organizations did not like what the NDP did to the Friedland formula. I mention that because that's the \$18 billion that was taken away. In fact, Gord Wilson said, "The 4% cap imposed by Bill 165 becomes a punitive measure in a sense for injured workers if inflation rises rapidly." The Canadian Labour Congress said it was "a regressive proposal of deindexing which could take billions of dollars away from the incomes of injured workers."

OPSEU Local 595 said, on August 25, 1994, "It is clear that the government is reforming the WCB mainly on the backs of injured workers." The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters, August 25: "In our view, this is simply a method of saving money on the backs of injured workers."

Grey-Bruce Injured Workers Union, August 29: "In essence, the \$200 increase in the pension is merely a salesman's ploy to sell to a few of those injured workers who are in dire straits. The balance of the package will diminish any of the future increases in the injured workers' pensions.... Suffice it to say it is a magic show of the lowest degree." That is what injured workers say.

Finally, we go up to Sault Ste Marie, Injured Workers' Advocates, August 31, 1994, at the committee hearings on Bill 165: "I feel with all my heart that if this bill is passed as is, it's a slap in the face to injured workers."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I would like to acknowledge the passionate speech of the member for Hamilton Centre. Because I have only a short period of time, I want to address one aspect that he identified when he was talking about the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, and I think he was absolutely correct. I tried to address that likewise in my speech last Thursday when this piece of legislation was introduced so quickly, at two hours' notice.

The part that I think the government may appreciate is that I don't know anywhere where you do not provide an appeal or you do not provide for the opportunity for that tribunal to be able to challenge a policy that has been put in place, because it is a living organization. That appeals board deals with live situations of people with difficulties, people who are injured, people who are maimed, people who have perhaps lost limbs. They are responding to live situations.

They can't say to their board: "Listen. In our experience this doesn't make sense. This policy is too limiting, it's too restrictive, it's unfair, it's not just." That doesn't make sense to me; it doesn't make common sense at all, because anybody who has run an organization knows that unless you apply your experience to the policies that you have — you have an evolution of policies and you have experiences that tell you you change policies as you go along in order to address the primary needs. We know that the primary needs of the compensation board are to be of help and to be of support to injured individuals, families that are affected, offspring that are affected and individuals who are struggling with trying to survive.

Mr Martin: I want to take this opportunity to compliment the member from Hamilton for the speech he made, consistent with speeches that he always makes in this House, which are very well researched and very factual and to the point and delivered with some high degree of compassion as he feels so strongly that this government continues down a road of taking away from and hammering those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

I was somewhat disappointed, member from Hamilton, as you were speaking, to hear the minister across the floor talk to the member from Renfrew about you being deceitful. Talk about the kettle calling the pot black or whatever, and I'm not for a minute suggesting that you're deceitful. If you want to talk about deceit, let's look at what this government is doing, which is consistent across the board.

They're taking 22% away from the poorest people in our communities, and you mentioned that in your speech, and then they turn around and tell them that they're doing this because it's going to be in their best interests, it's somehow good for them and it's good for the communities they live in. They're taking money out of the take-home pay of people who have worked in this province and, through no fault of their own, have found themselves injured and no longer able to work.

They're going to take money out of their pay packet and then they're turning around and suggesting that

somehow this is in their best interests, this is somehow good for them, this is somehow going to be an improvement in some way to the system, and their families and the communities in which they live are going to be better off because of this. They take money away from senior citizens. They now make seniors pay for a portion of their drugs and they tell them this also is going to be good for them and in their best interests. This is consistently the story we hear from this government, and ultimately it will come back and bite you.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a few comments with respect to the remarks made by the member for Hamilton Centre. I will say one thing about him: We can always hear him. He's certainly outspoken with his comments.

I will say that for any member in this House who has sat in their constituency office through the last number of years, and certainly since I've been elected, since 1990, workers' compensation, whether complaints from employees or complaints from employers, has been one of the major issues. Anyone who says that's not the case simply isn't telling the truth. It has been a major problem and clearly the system hasn't worked. Employees would complain that they're not being served well, that they're not getting sufficient benefits, that too many things are being challenged. The employers in turn would say: "We can't afford these terrible premiums. They're killing us. We can't expand our business to provide jobs." So when we ran for office in 1995, we undertook to do this.

1710

The member for Hamilton Centre is talking as if this has just suddenly popped out of the hat. It hasn't. This is something the Minister of Labour deliberately put forward from the time we ran for office. In fact, if you read the book you like to refer to all the time, the Common Sense Revolution, we talked about this.

There's a section on page 14 which talks about "Removing Barriers to Growth." One of those was cutting Workers' Compensation Board premiums. The purpose of that is to enable growth, to allow more people to work. "WCB premiums will be cut by 5%. This will save Ontario employers an estimated \$98.5 million. We will also implement our previously published six-point program for reforming the WCB, which will eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014, as demanded by the Employers' Council of Ontario. The WCB will have to be revamped altogether to restore business confidence, protect workers and bring fiscal sanity to the board's operations." She's doing that today.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the comments of my colleague from Ottawa Centre and my seatmate from Sault Ste Marie.

Very briefly, to the member for Dufferin-Peel, this is just the old trickle-down theory with a different spin. Workers know what happened to them in England and the United States under trickle-down and what happened to the deficit, which went through the roof, at the same time. You're not fooling anybody with that.

The fact of the matter is, this is strictly an employers' agenda. You talked about one of the complaints from

workers being the fact that the premiums aren't high enough; you're cutting the premiums. You talked about the fact that the system doesn't always serve injured workers. Well, you killed the royal commission that was there to do just that, to fix the system.

Nobody's going to buy your argument, and if that's the best you guys have got, you're in a lot of trouble come time to go out across the province and talk about this with the public and look them in the eye rather than being sheltered in this place. If that's the best you've got, you're in a lot of trouble, because what you talk about and what's happening to workers are two different things. Workers are being hurt.

To the minister, I want to say very directly that the quotes she read out — I would also suggest to her that she look at the fact that our reform did not give one penny back to corporations. Every penny of the changes in the formula stayed in the system, either to deal with the unfunded liability, which worked — it's down three years in a row, over \$1 billion in total — or it went to give injured workers more money. That's what we did. So the quotes you raise — ask those same workers, do they want our Bill 165 or your Bill 99? I'll bet heavy money on what the outcome is.

There's one last thing I want to say while I'm on my feet, to anybody who is watching this. Do two things: Phone your local backbench Tory MPP and ask him how they can do this, and be at the public hearings. It's crucial. Be there.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to rise today to take part in the second reading debate on Bill 99, the Workers' Compensation Reform Act.

It's important at the outset to say that this bill is really about repairing a system that needs repair. My colleague Mr Tilson just mentioned that this is something that everybody — employers and workers, especially injured workers — has said doesn't work and needs to be repaired. It's a system that isn't financially secure right now, and some of these changes are needed to make sure that the system is there long into the future for injured workers. That's what this bill is about, and I think we should keep that uppermost in our minds.

I also appreciate the member from Hamilton's loud speech and debate, his input on this bill. I expect that when we go out on the road — and as the new parliamentary assistant for labour, I expect to be at all those hearings — I do expect to hear some loud voices. I will say that loud for the sake of loud isn't nearly as effective as a logical, rational discourse, which will always carry more weight anywhere in the province, on any issue, in any debate. I would encourage the member for Hamilton East to have that kind of input and to give us his input in that manner on this bill and any other bills that come forward with regard to the WCB.

A third thing I'd like to mention, since I didn't get up on a two-minute interjection, is Bill 15. The bipartite board has now been changed because it was ineffective and it was locked into inaction. It was an inefficient board. Now we've got a new multipartite board of six members, with a labour representative, an employer representative and people with years of experience in the insurance system who are there now operating the board.

What's happened since that occurred? From the fourth-quarter report from the Workers' Compensation Board, I can tell you about the changes already in a more efficient and effective Workers' Compensation Board because of that change to a multipartite board.

"WCB investment revenue increased by \$118 million in 1996 to \$711 million, compared to \$593 million in 1995. Administrative and other expenses decreased by \$18 million in 1996. This decrease was the direct result of management initiatives to control salary and other administrative costs. Legislative expenses also decreased by \$15 million. These results clearly indicate that the WCB continues to strive towards financial sustainability and that the WCB is fully aware of the financial challenges that remain ahead, given an unfunded liability which now stands at \$10.4 billion compared to \$10.9 billion in 1995."

Just by a small change to the board of directors, making a multipartite board, bringing in people who have had years of actuarial experience and management experience in the insurance industry, there are huge savings already. I think that's something of note.

Also, the member across decries any changes we bring in to the WCB. He said before that injuries would increase radically, but if we look at lost-time injuries reported in 1996, we see that the number actually decreased from 1995 by 17,400, or 12.1%, compared to the previous year. The minister talked about mining. That's an area where there has always been a high incidence rate, but the number of lost-time injuries reported in 1996 compared to 1995 was a decrease of 12.5%; in transportation a decrease of 5.7%; in construction a decrease of 7.2%; in the retail-wholesale trade a decrease of 8.6%; and in manufacturing a decrease in lost-time injuries of 16.4%. Although the member opposite in the past has decried that any changes we have made would cause great harm and cause injuries to go up, that has not been the case in 1996 compared to 1995.

Before I leave that, I might add that this government believes, and every other party and every Ontarian believes, that any injury in the workplace is too many injuries. That of course is the goal of all legislation we undertake in labour reform: to reduce the number of injuries, because any injury is too many.

We believe that reforms outlined in Bill 99 will achieve our government's goal of a fully funded system that is sensitive and accountable to the needs of injured workers and affordable to employers who fund the system and provide jobs. It will also be a system that has as its top priority the prevention of workplace injury and illness, along with the timely and safe return to work of those who are injured.

I'm sure that all the honourable members of this House agree that the present workers' compensation system is in trouble, is a system that needs a complete overhaul. The member opposite's party tried to make some changes. I might quote again from the Liberal red book in the last election: "Cleaning up Workers' Compensation." I quote from their book: "Ontario's workers' compensation system is a mess. High premiums are chasing away investment and jobs. The unfunded liability is out of control, soaring by \$2 million a day.... The WCB is

failing both the employers who pay for it and the injured workers it is supposed to serve."

Between the two parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, I think 80% of the population were in support of the two parties in the last election, and both parties, as Mr Tilson has pointed out, ran on reforming the WCB system, a system that hasn't been substantially rewritten since it was first written in 1914. So it's time for change.

I might also point out that in my own riding, George Schrivver wrote a report on the Niagara region. It was a survey of 100 manufacturing firms. They asked those manufacturing firms at the time what the biggest detriments to locating in Niagara and locating in Ontario were. The number one concern among those manufacturing firms was the cost of the WCB premiums and the red tape and the incredibly difficult time they had dealing with the WCB as it has evolved over the past 80 years.

1720

I've also had many workers in my own office coming in to tell me the problems they've had with the system. I had Minister Jackson down to talk to several injured workers early on, probably a year ago now, when he was doing his consultation on workers' compensation. Those injured workers talked about the years' worth of problems they've had with the system. So it is indeed a system that needs a complete overhaul.

I must also point out, before I get to more of my prepared speech, that the member opposite believes that the Ontario Mining Association was listened to by the government. But so were a lot of other people. I mentioned the 80% before who voted for both the Conservatives and the Liberals. I can go back to the Liberal red book and talk about some of the things they called for:

"The Ontario government has appointed a royal commission to look at workers' compensation. This will delay reform for at least a year, while using up \$2 million in taxpayers' money. It's time for action, not another study. A Liberal government will scrap the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation and get on with real reform." Well, we've done that.

What else did the Liberals call for? They called for a "freeze on WCB rates paid by employers." We've done that and one better.

They said, "Change the makeup of the WCB board of directors to make it less partisan and more accountable to a wider range of stakeholders and the people of Ontario." Done.

"Improve the administration of the WCB by hiring a chief executive officer with a strong background in accounting and the administration of insurance." Done.

Create better return-to-work programs: It's being done in Bill 99.

"Cut down on fraud." Done in Bill 15.

"Put the WCB on a sound financial footing by eliminating overpayments to injured workers, cutting administrative costs, and improving the rate of return on the investment portfolio by hiring private sector money managers." Done. All done.

"Disband the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and put it under the WCB." Done with Bill 99.

Nine for nine, we are with the Liberal red book. I expect to see a lot of support from them in public hearings and as this bill goes forward.

Previous governments recognized that there are problems with the system. The NDP knew that there were problems when they introduced the Friedland formula to deal with some of the financial problems with the WCB system. However, previous governments' efforts to fix it were patchwork at best, grafting so many changes on to the original legislation that the act has become cumbersome and difficult to understand, use and enforce. These changes, taken together, have created a fragmented system that fails to meet its obligation to injured workers, employers and the people of Ontario.

As the Minister of Labour informed the House last week, the reforms in Bill 99 are based on five principles:

(1) Restoring the financial viability of the system by retiring the unfunded liability by the year 2014. A system in financial distress serves no one well.

(2) Refocusing the system as an insurance plan that compensates for work-related injury and illness.

(3) Prevention of injury and illness in the workplace.

(4) Self-reliance of employers and employees, particularly with regard to illness and injury prevention and return to work.

(5) Return to work in a more safe and timely manner when injury or illness occurs.

These are all equally important elements of the bill, but for the purposes of my participation in the debate today, I would like to focus more closely on one, the whole issue of early and safe return to work. Early return to suitable employment must be a primary objective of the new workers' compensation system.

Our consultations showed that the system is not doing nearly as well as it can in getting workers back to meaningful employment as soon as possible. WCB statistics also bear this out. For instance, WCB data indicate that roughly half the workers referred to vocational rehabilitation services remain unemployed.

A recent Ontario survey of workers with permanent partial disabilities indicated that 60% of those who did return to work suffered subsequent injuries and periods of unemployment. As a result, a significant percentage of the WCB's voc rehab caseload is made up of repeat clients. There are also indications that VR programs may actually delay return to work. The broad availability of voc rehab services and voc rehab supplements encourages many workers to use and stay in voc rehab. This is consistent with WCB data that indicate that the average duration of temporary compensation claims in the year of injury increased from 28 to 33 days between 1985 and 1994.

This trend continues. In 1995 the WCB spent almost half a billion dollars on vocational rehabilitation, yet the system failed to get workers back on the job in anywhere near the numbers we need and many workers who did return to work were subsequently reinjured.

While previous reforms have tried to encourage return to work and re-employment, they have not gone far enough and in fact may have discouraged effective return-to-work efforts. For example, there has been insufficient cooperation at the very early stages following an injury on the part of the injured worker, the accident employer and health care provider in the return-to-work process.

The emphasis on vocational rehabilitation, often unfocused and open-ended and which only starts months following an injury, has resulted in increased costs and increased duration of benefits without a noticeable improvement in return to work. The level of benefits has tended to encourage injured workers to stay on vocational rehabilitation rather than focus on an early return to work. Finally, incentives to promote return to work are either inadequate or are being misused.

The evidence is clear that the current focus on vocational rehabilitation has failed to meet the needs of workers and employers. This has had a devastating long-term effect on many workers and has imposed a future financial burden on the generation of workers to come. Yet there is no disagreement on the value of a safe and timely return to work among the three parties most directly involved in the process: employers, workers and health care professionals. Time and again during our consultations we heard about the importance of getting workers back on the job as quickly as possible and as safely as possible.

The Ontario Federation of Labour itself in its submission during the review conducted by Minister Jackson said: "Cooperative return-to-work programs create a classic win-win situation.... Statistics tell us that the longer an injured worker is off work, the less likely he or she is to return and the more likely they are to live a life of poverty.... Employers save big money with timely return-to-work programs."

As for the role of employers, the Employers' Advocacy Council, a group with a long-time interest in WCB issues, says: "Shifting responsibilities of vocational rehabilitation to the workplace parties would provide an opportunity for flexibility and creativity of the workplace parties. To facilitate this, a cooperative team approach is required. Workers, accident employers, unions, doctors and the WCB must work together."

For its part, the Ontario Medical Association also says, about return to work: "Any new return-to-work model must recognize the therapeutic importance of the patient being as active as possible, as early as possible, in the course of the illness or injury. Physicians are thus encouraged to help patients focus on their capabilities, rather than disabilities, and to keep active."

Bill 99 will take this unanimous desire for a more effective return-to-work process and will make it a reality. Bill 99 creates reciprocal obligations for employers and workers to cooperate in getting workers back to work in a safe and timely manner. The changes will ensure that employers who invest in return-to-work initiatives are rewarded for their investment not only through lower assessment rates but also through reduced absenteeism, greater productivity and higher morale.

In recent discussions I've had with many different workplaces, what's interesting is that there's a certain corporate culture different employers have. This corporate culture has gone down to their workforce and they have an agreement, they have a clear understanding, that good health and safety is in the best interests of both the employer and employee, both from a moral view and from an economic view. That's an important thing to remember, that that corporate culture being spread

throughout the entire corporation, among employers and workers, needs to occur in Ontario, and I think Bill 99 can help that.

Too many employers in the past have turned their backs on injured workers. Now, under Bill 99, employers and workers will be required to take steps to ensure the early and safe return of their injured workers to work, including obligations to contact each other as soon as possible after an injury and maintain contact; attempt to identify and arrange suitable employment that is consistent with the worker's functional abilities and restores the worker's pre-injury earnings; and cooperate in return-to-work measures required by the board. This requirement for employers and workers to remain in contact with one another throughout the important early stages of the disability will serve to reinforce the workplace connection, a connection we know right now is not maintained. This is vital if return-to-work outcomes are to improve across the system.

1730

In recognition of the special characteristics of the construction industry, construction workers and employers will be required to cooperate with the board's return-to-work measures, as set out in a regulation to be developed in consultation with the construction industry.

To improve our return-to-work success rate, it is absolutely vital that both the worker and the employer have access to relevant information about the worker's abilities and functional limitations at different points after an injury. That is why workers will be required to consent to the release of functional abilities information to the employer as part of their application for benefits.

Functional abilities information — and we should be clear about this — is non-medical information that describes what a worker is capable of doing and is limited to information about the impact of the injury. It will help the employer understand the worker's physical abilities and limitations and will speed up the process for reentry into the workplace. It should be noted that the functional abilities information is not confidential health information. A one-page form is presently being developed by the WCB, in consultation with health professionals and other stakeholders. It will soon be released for public comment and it will be available before public hearings.

In light of the new responsibilities of the workplace parties, the board will be positioned to assume more of a guiding and facilitative role, to monitor, mediate and resolve disputes in the return-to-work process. The board will have broad authority to provide mediation services to help workplace parties resolve disagreements themselves rather than relying on board and appeals tribunal hearings. The board will also be permitted to establish a list of service providers that employers can draw on for the purposes of putting in place return-to-work and labour market re-entry strategies. The board will have the authority to provide employers with financial incentives to invest in health and safety and return to work.

In cases where a worker has been unable to return to work with the pre-injury employer and has cooperated in all return-to-work and medical recovery measures, the board will conduct an assessment to determine whether a

labour market re-entry plan is required. A labour market re-entry plan is a program designed to enable the worker to re-enter the labour market and to reduce or eliminate the worker's loss of earnings resulting from the injury. The plan will be developed by the board in consultation with the worker and, where appropriate, with the employer and with the worker's attending health professional.

Bill 99 will reinforce greater employer and employee self-reliance by specifying that a failure to cooperate in return-to-work and labour market re-entry will result in a reduction or suspension of benefits for workers or in stiff penalties for employers. The board will be responsible for developing and administering clear and reasonable policies with respect to the application of worker and employer penalties.

Our goal in the return-to-work provisions of Bill 99 is not only to provide injured workers with the support they need to secure employment, but also to ensure that the resources invested in labour market re-entry programs will result in re-employment and consequently in a lower long-term cost to the system. As the minister said in her opening remarks on second reading debate, Bill 99 represents a profound change in direction for the WCB. Under its new leadership, the board is preparing for a smooth and successful implementation of Bill 99, including the return-to-work changes I have been talking about.

The WCB is moving towards a return-to-work model built on the nurse practitioner as case manager. The nurse case manager will provide support and information in a non-adversarial manner to assist injured workers in obtaining the medical care they need. The nurse will also provide support for both the injured worker and employer to facilitate early and safe return to work. It's important that workers don't go back too soon and in things they can't handle and get reinjured. Our reinjury stats, as I've said before, are too high.

The nurse case manager is in the best position to negotiate with physicians to ensure prompt and proper treatment and to ensure the focus is on a safe and timely return to work. Unlike previous reform efforts which were never implemented by the board, real change will now take root. But I must emphasize that along with the changes taking place at the WCB, employers and workers will play a key role in seeing that the return-to-work proposals in Bill 99 are realized.

We are counting on the workplace parties to recognize that it is in their interests to make the new system work. Both parties must realize the advantages that flow from getting workers back on the job in a safe and timely manner.

Improving Ontario's return-to-work record is just one element of Bill 99, but it is a very important element. It will give workers the dignity of re-employment while involving employers in meaningful and safe return to work very early in the process, and of course it will reduce costs significantly. That's a winning combination.

I look forward to hearing more about this important change and other aspects of Bill 99 in public hearings during the summer.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I would just caution the new parliamentary assistant that like his colleague from Dufferin-Peel, if that's what he's going to tell injured workers this summer when we're out on the road, he's going to have a very, very uncomfortable summer.

I think it's particularly revealing that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour talked about the fact that the board is now better, implying, of course, better because the riff-raff working people were turfed out, fired, which is what your government did.

You fired the worker representatives who were on the WCB and now you've got insurance representatives. Isn't that special? The reason you've got insurance representatives there is that the KPMG report that studied the WCB for you said that 75% of the claim processing can be privatized. If it's privatized, who gets that work? The insurance industry. It's very revealing that you think that somehow the board is magically better because worker reps were fired and insurance reps hired. The reality is you didn't talk much, Mr Parliamentary Assistant, about workers' needs. You talked about employers' needs; you didn't talk about workers. What about their needs? What about injured workers' needs? What about the fact that the voc rehab process you're so proud to talk about also means firing 350 voc rehab staff people? What about those workers?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I appreciate the comments from the member for Niagara Falls. I, as have all people who have been around here for a while, have had the opportunity or the occasion more often than one would like to have people dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board in my office, and I can tell you that the Workers' Compensation Board has at times just plain destroyed people's lives. Sometimes it's not the injury that destroyed the lives. I've seen the Workers' Compensation Board, through its processes and its procedures and its bureaucracy, just absolutely destroy the human soul. I don't think there's any other way to describe it, and it is not good.

What I would have expected from this government when dealing with this was to recognize that not only doesn't the workers' compensation system always work well for workers, but sometimes it does destroy people's lives, and perhaps they would have taken a broader view.

Perhaps it is not as important whether the injury took place at work or at home or in an automobile or wherever, and maybe, just maybe, we should be looking at something in this province in terms of universal disability, which might take some of the kind of class warfare I hear in here today out of a system and make sure that those people who are disabled, unable to work, are compensated and can live reasonable lives.

1740

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I listened with interest to the parliamentary assistant trying to tell this House that this bill is somehow going to make the situation for injured workers better. I'm reminded of what his colleague the Minister of Education tried to do with Bill 104 when he pretended that somehow this was going to help kids in the classroom, when all it did was set in place the opportunity for this Conservative government to take another \$1 billion out of education.

The fact of the matter is, I say to the parliamentary assistant, there's not a single thing in Bill 99 that's going to improve the lot of injured workers coming into your office or mine. This bill, the title of which doesn't even refer to injured workers any more, is merely an attempt to transfer money that is owed to injured workers to your employer friends. That's the bottom line of this legislation.

In the purpose clause, gone is the reference to fair compensation and rehab services which used to appear. The government is now only interested in providing rehab if it's accountable and if it's fiscally available to do so. Gone is the disease panel which used to work in some ways to try and ensure that those who suffered from industrial disease would get some compensation.

Gone is any entitlement to compensation for occupational chronic stress. Gone are the benefits for chronic pain if the disability goes beyond normal healing times, and I'd love to know who's going to have the discretion to determine that at the WCB. Gone is the automatic filing of a WCB claim by a family physician when a worker goes and seeks treatment for an accident at work.

Reduced are the benefits injured workers now receive, from 90% of net to 85%. Reduced are the pension benefits, which are going to be cut in half. Reduced is the cost of living protection for almost all injured workers. There's nothing in here for injured workers. It's all about how to pay back your rich corporate friends.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd like to congratulate the parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara Falls. He certainly has indicated that the legislation that's being introduced, Bill 99, attempts to provide a balance. It tries to ensure that future benefits are available for injured workers and that the system is able to continue to provide for those benefits.

I think what's been missing from this debate is the fact that we're trying to shift the focus away from compensation to the prevention of illness and injury. Again, I think that has been pointed out quite well. We don't want injured workers in this province. We want to make sure that we work with people in this province to focus on the prevention of illness and injury and that's why our act has been totally rewritten.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate that the member for Hamilton Centre pointed out that KPMG had recommended — or one of the members opposite did — privatizing claims processing. I want to emphatically state that WCB did not accept that KPMG recommendation to privatize claims processing.

Mr Christopherson: You fired the voc rehab staff.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate that at the end of the time that is being provided we're going to have a system in this province that is making changes similar to all the other WCBs in Canada and we're going to have a system here that continues to be among the most generous. In fact, other provinces, some of them, have reduced benefits to 75% and 80%. Our benefits are only being reduced to 85% and we will be continuing to build on the reductions that were —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Member for Niagara Falls, you have two minutes.

Mr Maves: Just some quick replies to the member for Hamilton Centre: I know we'll spend lots of time together over the next while. His comments about labour representatives on the previous board as being riff-raff were his alone. No one over here ever referred to them in such a manner. The member opposite —

Mr Christopherson: You fired them.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Stop the clock for a minute. The member for Hamilton Centre, you had ample time to express your opinion. You did so. Everybody listened. Now it's your turn to listen.

Mr Maves: Furthermore, there is still labour representation on the board. That labour representation is just as responsible for the new successes of the board as anybody else is, and they should be congratulated for their recent successes.

My whole speech was mostly about return to work and the new obligations on employers to help injured workers get back to work, get back into the workplace, and they talk about it like that is a negative thing. Everyone I have talked to about WCB, everyone I have talked to about Bill 99, agrees that an injured worker getting back to work in the appropriate time, getting safety back to his old job, is a key to reforming the WCB system. I cited statistics at the beginning that showed that the number of people who did get back to work with their old employers was way too low, so I'm rather astonished and disappointed that the member opposite would think so lightly about the importance of getting back to work.

He talks about workers' needs, and workers need jobs. Between 1990 and 1995 in this province we lost 10,000 jobs. We have created over 140,000 jobs since we have been in office and we'll continue to do that so workers have jobs, and injured workers, with this new bill, will return to work in the place of employment that they were in before. That's the type of change that needs to occur for the benefit of everybody in the WCB system in Ontario.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm pleased to be able to rise today on Bill 99, the government's attempt to fix workers' compensation. At the beginning of my remarks I'd like to take maybe a different slant and not directly address the bill as I will in a few minutes, but talk about why I'm concerned about injured workers.

By the end of this week I will have been in this place 12 years, and I've had a lot of experience over those years working in my two constituency offices in the riding of Timiskaming with injured workers. In fact, probably up till about three or four years ago, Workers' Compensation Board cases were the largest percentage of the caseload of work we had in those offices. The reason would be that a majority of the people who work for a living in our riding of Timiskaming in northern Ontario, a riding at this moment about 100 miles long and 80 miles wide, I would say earn their living through the sweat of their brow.

We are a resource-dependent area. Resource extraction is basically the base of our economy; that is mining specifically. We have gold mines primarily now, though

we used to have some silver mines in Cobalt, and we have quite a thriving lumber industry, which means we have not only woodwork happening out in the bush but also in various processing plants, such as particle board and oriented strandboard. These are all heavy, labour-intensive industries. They're hard jobs, they're very physically demanding, and unfortunately mining and forestry and the other main industry in our area, agriculture, are very prone to accidents.

With all the best will between employers and employees, unions and management to try to make the workplace as safe as possible, we still to this day find ourselves with tragedies, people being killed and people being hurt and maimed. We try as hard as we can to prevent that but we still have these accidents. Therefore, we have a system that we've developed since the early 1900s, the Workers' Compensation Act, and subsequent governments have tried to make improvements to it to make it better.

Over time, I think what we have with this government is a government that is trying to somehow fix this unfunded liability problem, which they see as a major problem, really on the backs of the workers. It's unfortunate that the member for Niagara Falls isn't here now, because I wanted to speak to his remarks more fully than I could have in the minute and a half allowed after his speech, when he said he thought it was a fair tradeoff that employers received a 5% reduction in their premiums in order to try to cut the costs to employers of workers' compensation. I would say to him that what they're doing is not fair to injured workers, because while, yes, the unfunded liability is a problem, I think this government exaggerates how big a problem it is and wants to basically try to solve that problem on the backs of the workers. Under this bill, starting January 1, 1998, workers now will have a reduction in their compensation by 5%, while at the same time employers are being told, and this happened a year ago, that they have a 5% reduction in the premiums they pay. If you apply common sense to that equation, that's not fair to the workers.

1750

What we said in our campaign platform going into the last campaign was that, yes, we were very concerned about the high cost of premiums and the cost of premiums escalating over the years. What we were going to do to try to get control of that, to get a handle on that, would be to freeze those premiums for employers so at least employers could be assured that their costs would no longer go up, and that as we worked through the system, possibly some day, just like a tax cut some day, we maybe could work on this.

But first you've got to fix these problems. You've got to fix the unfunded liability in the Workers' Compensation Board just like you have to solve the debt problem of the Ontario government. You have to work at it first in a responsible manner, and then maybe if you've got that solved you can give cuts in premiums or tax cuts later on. This is far too early to do this. Yes, we have over a \$12-billion unfunded liability in the Workers' Compensation Board and at that very same time we're giving the employers a 5% premium break. That's wrong, if we're going to be punitive to the workers.

The minister I suppose was right when she said this is now a shift in focus. It's a shift away from the compensation aspects of workers' compensation to rehabilitation and other aspects of the board. The problem is that we still have injured workers. I think it's very important that with injured workers no longer having the ability to earn an income for themselves and their families, they have the support of the workers' compensation system in this province.

Employers have to remember that the deal that was struck, back in the early 1900s, with employers and the government of the day was that by entering into a workers' compensation system they no longer had the fear of litigation from an injured worker, they no longer had the fear of being sued by an injured worker or the family of a deceased worker. That's a pretty good protection for employers, that they agreed to and still agree to today. I think they have to realize that while, yes, workers' compensation premiums are very high, it is a worthwhile premium to pay because they save themselves court costs and possibly very large settlements in civil court because of that protection.

Because we've had this system for so long, employers, especially in major industries where there is still dangerous work occurring in those workplaces forget what the high cost of civil litigation protection might be if it was to go to the private sector. That's an important matter for employers to realize. They should be happy with a government that would just freeze their rates, not necessarily reduce those rates.

I think the government members are going to be very surprised when this committee goes across the province this summer, to have public hearings for this bill, about how angry injured workers are going to be when they realize they're going to have to cough up 5% of their compensation and employers are getting a break, as of a year ago, of 5%. We've got to remind people that when we're talking about injured workers, there are a large percentage of injured workers who are on 100% compensation, who no longer have the ability to earn an income.

Going back to my area and much of northern Ontario, many of the men who found themselves in mines and mills across the north were boys who left high school, who realized that by leaving school early in those days they could go into these high-paying jobs — at that time there were a lot of those around — and they didn't finish their high school, and for sure they didn't go on to any sort of post-secondary education. Now many of them find themselves in their 50s, find it very difficult to retool themselves, to re-educate themselves, and find it very difficult to get into other sorts of employment that don't rely upon the sweat of their brow.

What we have to realize is that these are people who no longer have the ability to earn an income for themselves or their families. Why should we be punitive to them and deny them the opportunity to have the income they would have had at work? The workplace owes them that income because they were injured in that workplace, and we must never forget that.

The other area that is of concern that we want to focus in on, and we imagine the public will too when we come to committee, is the lesser entitlement for chronic occupational stress and pain. It is important that an employer

should note that if this now is being given less importance by the Workers' Compensation Board, this possibly leaves open opportunities for employees to civil litigation for stress. I think employers better think twice about letting that go and thinking, "This might further reduce my premiums as an employer," because it could just open the door for a lot of further costs for employers if this gets to the courts. Employers would be well advised to be talking to the Workers' Compensation Board to keep occupational stress and pain in workers' compensation so they would have that protection, and of course workers would benefit from that too.

The other point we're concerned about is the elimination of the Occupational Disease Panel as an independent body, because now, with this bill, it's going to be folded into the WCB. The concern of this is, of course, that they will no longer have that independent view to basically make recommendations to the Workers' Compensation Board as to what occupational diseases should be covered. We may have a problem there in trying to prove new diseases that come along.

Mr Michael Brown: It sounds like a conflict of interest.

Mr Ramsay: My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin said it probably sounds like a conflict of interest. I agree with him; that's right. That's why when we established this in the late 1980s, it was established as an independent body from the Workers' Compensation Board.

The other concern workers have is the confidentiality of medical information. It is very important, with all the reports that flow back and forth between the case workers, the board and in some cases the employer, that we keep very strict confidentiality of the medical information of the injured worker. This bill talks about a medical form, but the bill doesn't spell out what the contents of medical information on this form will be. So we're very concerned what information through regulation might be on this form.

The issue of disclosure of medical records is and always has been a highly sensitive matter. While disclosure is for the sole purpose of facilitating the worker's return to work, who can be certain that privacy concerning medical records will be protected? This is a concern we obviously want to talk about.

The other concern I have: Dealing with cases in my constituency office over the years, we have quite a sound appeals process, the last avenue being where we have called WCAT, the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Through Bill 99 the Harris government is basically going to be eroding the power of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. It will no longer be an independent entity. It's been functioning as a last resort right now for workers, to protect ordinary workers, but after Bill 99 they will only be allowed to question WCB policy, not whether the WCB is fulfilling its obligations under the act.

I think this is a very serious erosion of the powers of this appeals tribunal, one that's going to be a detriment to injured workers across this province. I would ask the government to reconsider that when they go to public hearings this summer and hear from the workers across this province.

One of the issues not addressed in Bill 99, but of concern to injured workers, is the possible privatization of rehabilitation services. It has been hinted by this government that it may be looking at the privatization of vocational rehabilitation services. Having this in the WCB I think keeps it strong and keeps it related directly to the needs of the workers who are there.

Mr Speaker, I see by the clock that you may wish to adjourn for the day, so I will take my place and allow you to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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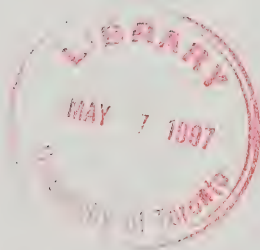
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 1 May 1997

Jeudi 1^{er} mai 1997



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} mai 1997

The House met at 1004.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I move private member's notice of motion number 52:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should produce a concrete plan for the development of better health care in this province. Such a plan must:

Ensure a high standard of health services are available to all Ontarians;

Include appropriate policies to reflect regional and demographic needs, including small and rural communities, northern communities, large urban communities, medium-sized urban communities, high-growth communities, women's health, francophone health issues, seniors' health;

Recognize that local communities must be allowed to determine their particular needs;

Link improvements in primary care, community health, home care, long-term care, mental health, drug benefits, public health and emergency services such as ambulance to decisions concerning hospitals and other elements in an integrated health plan;

Identify and ensure equivalent community-based services are set up and funded in advance of any changes to hospital services;

Include a human resources plan which reflects the high value Ontarians place on their nurses, doctors and other health professionals;

Guarantee any tally of government reinvestment includes money which has actually been spent rather than simply announced, so as not to confuse the public.

Further, that until this plan is produced, subject to public input and approved by a committee of this House, the Ontario government should:

Restore cuts made to hospitals which are causing a reduction in the quality of patient care across the province;

Stop the experimental use of formulas for patient care which are sending sick Ontarians out of hospital quicker and sicker;

Stop its misguided closure of hospitals in the province through the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Pursuant to standing order 96, the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Kennedy: I have brought forward this resolution in the spirit of recognizing one of the key responsibilities

of this Legislature when it comes to provision of public services in this province, and that is, no matter which party sits in government, no matter what measures it deems are necessary for the wellbeing of the public, it is important not only to provide those services but to sustain public confidence that those services will exist currently in a way that is important to the people who are affected, and into the future.

What we have seen in recent months is that the public has been stricken with a real sense of crisis around their health care system. The public has seen what used to be a system that was predictable and reliable at the times of urgency, of sickness, of illness for themselves and their family members, turned into one racked by crisis: by the crisis of a hospital closing that is important to them; the crisis of cutbacks which affect the very basic care that they receive, which sends esteemed health professionals like nurses, and now even doctors, into previously unknown unemployment, and disconnects people on whom we have not only spent money but invested a substantial amount of trust to carry out important duties in our community away from those duties.

That public confidence is extremely fragile at the present moment. We have had surveys by various polling groups, but we don't need those surveys. We have talked to people in our constituencies. We know that the level of care being offered by the system has been diminished in recent months. It would be easy to pinpoint the various contributing factors to that. We could talk largely around political choices between tax cuts and cash flow for that tax cut from the system, but I think if we want to find some resolution from this House that addresses the public confidence, then we have to look for those areas in which we could agree.

Hopefully, one area where we could agree is the need for a plan. The public has a right to expect from this government and from this House as a whole some regard for that concern that they're feeling, to see that there is a plan which pulls together what the state is of one of the most important public services that touches their lives, and to see that ahead of time. What we have seen in recent years are cuts to hospitals across the board, in effect arbitrary cuts in every community in the province. So 210 public hospitals have had to decide in 210 different ways how to cope with historic cuts to their services, cuts which have ranged between 11% and 14% or 15% of their grants from the province. This has caused all manner of strange adaptations.

1010

In Brampton it means they now have the lowest number of hours — it's no longer in days — that women stay in hospital after giving birth. In that hospital they're proud of having achieved that kind of accomplishment,

but when you ask the very simple question: "Are the mothers happy? Are they satisfied? Does this work?" the answer is no. The response is a sad shrug, saying, "What else can we do?"

Similar things are found all across this province. Of course we stand here today not looking for an arbitrary plan. We're not looking for something on paper that simply sits there as a potential to cover up and paper over cracks which have now emerged in the system. What we're looking for is the kind of plan that is going to bring some assurance, for example, to the family of Ed Whitehill, who in Peterborough ended his life in circumstances that none of us should have to face. Ed Whitehill, at the age of 82, saw a hospital for the first time in 40 years, spent an overnight in the emergency ward. The family was told to go home, that there was no room for him, and 20 to 30 stretchers in the hallway were testament to that. Those people on those stretchers heard the next day, of course unfortunately a well-known statement, the daughter saying, "How long has my father been lying here dead?" That lack of rooms meant that Ed Whitehill died in the ignominy of the bright lights of an emergency room hallway. That family wants this province to not let that happen again.

So does the family of Leie Rykene. Leie Rykene spent five days waiting in York region for a hospital bed, a cardiac bed, to be able to get an angiogram — five days waiting — to the tremendous upset of all those who were caring for her: her family, the physicians, the specialists. The system did not respond. It didn't respond because we've enacted arbitrary cuts ahead of time. We are looking at hospital restructuring, but we're doing that in isolation; we're not doing that as part of an overall plan on how to make the system better.

If there's any commitment that this House needs to make clear today, it's that whatever changes are made and whatever disagreements we might have about that, we're going to stand up to make this system better by some objective standard.

In this province we don't have the checks and balances against making huge mistakes. We have a system that looks after the behaviour of doctors. We have none to assure standards in either our community care services or in what's existing in hospitals. So we know there's been some recognition already on the part of the government that there are holes in their approach. Like any government, they have the opportunity to admit those mistakes and to rectify them. So they have said of late that small and rural communities will have a policy that's appropriate for small and rural communities. If that's so — and we applaud the idea that this sensitivity might exist in the government benches, particularly in the Ministry of Health — then why don't we have the same sensitivity for northern communities, which have seen themselves devastated in terms of what's happened to hospital services in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, with cuts of 25% and 35% of the services available there?

Why not for large urban communities? If we pause long enough, not for a great deal of time but long enough, to look at what's happening, for example, for Women's College and for Wellesley, for Doctors Hospital, even for Northwestern, we would look at the impact

of community hospitals, which have already paved the way of how we can do health care in the future, reaching out to some of the poorest people in the province, in the instance of Wellesley, involving them in their health services, already starting them down the road of preventive health. That can't be recreated once it's gone.

In terms of women's health, we have an arm's-length list of firsts and advantages for women which have been gained from having a locus of practical, hands-on activity taking place under one roof. Those things would be readily apparent if we had a standard for women's health.

If we looked at the needs as well, for senior's health, we would recognize that the plans so far, such as they are in this province, take us only to 2001, and yet it's 2005 and 2010 when we're going to see a huge growth in demand for seniors.

We would recognize some of the area needs, for example the number of seniors served by Branson Hospital, who have nowhere to go. They literally have no place in the community that they can go in terms of Metropolitan Toronto.

We would recognize places like the Grace in Ottawa, and Riverside. The Grace was the cheapest way of delivering birth services anywhere in the province, yet it's being shut down; Riverside, with some of the greatest efficiencies, and yet being shut down; and in other areas, the Hotel Dieu in St Catharines, with some of the greatest efficiencies in the Niagara region, also being threatened with the idea of being shut down; and all for the lack of a plan, all for the lack of a government willing to take the time to really preserve health care.

So part of what we look at today — and we are particularly mindful of the Montfort. When we look at the Montfort Hospital, we recognize that we no longer have any soul in terms of our health care plan, any connection between the real needs of people when we think we can antiseptically remove from the francophone community what they've fought for for 20 and 30 and 40 years: a place to train, a place to achieve medical excellence, a place to get services in times of emergency, a place for francophones to belong in this province, and proof of it. If that can't be accommodated by a health care system, then we really have no plan at all.

If we're not prepared to give assurances ahead of time that community-based services will be there, funded and in place when anything is removed from hospitals, then we don't mean it. And if we don't mean it, if we're not serious about making sure the human resources plans are there so that — our doctors are leaving now in greater numbers, even though they haven't been hard done by in some respects by this government, but there was a one-year war this government had with those doctors before reaching a deal with them that may cost the province a lot of money. But it's not the money. It's the feeling, because there's no human resources plan, that this province doesn't want them.

It comes down to whether this House wants to preserve public health care, because if we're not going to preserve the confidence in that system, if we're not going to have regard for the people who've seen tragedies because of the mistakes we've made so far, then what we really mean is we're headed for an American-style system,

through the back door, by taking away people's belief in the system.

Members of this House, we can't allow that to happen. You have an opportunity today to make sure it does not.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to congratulate my friend from York South for bringing forward this resolution for debate in this House this morning. I want to speak just briefly about the two first items on his list, appropriate policy to reflect the regional demographic needs of small and rural communities and northern communities.

I want to congratulate the government and the minister for bringing in legislation yesterday for nurse practitioners, the recognition of their right to practice in this province, because that's of particular importance to small, rural communities and to northern communities. It is one way of trying to deal with the doctor shortage as well as ensuring that we provide good quality, economic services to people in small communities right across the province of Ontario.

I am concerned, though, that this government is not prepared to move beyond that to properly serve small communities. I'm going to talk specifically about two communities in my riding, Richards Landing on St Joseph Island and Thessalon on the North Shore.

Both of these communities have small hospitals. Richards Landing has the Matthews Memorial Hospital, based on a foundation established by a summer resident of that community many years ago and the community has worked very hard to maintain that hospital and to provide services, to raise funds for that hospital for many, many years.

This government, the Minister of Health, approved an operating plan for the Sault area hospitals for 1996-97 which approved the closure of the in-patient beds at Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing and most of the in-patient beds at Thessalon Hospital in Thessalon. There are provisions for moving Thessalon Hospital to another location if funding was available, and funding has not yet been made available.

The government said they were going to guarantee 24-hour emergency services in both of these locations, but with only one nurse on duty per shift. Everyone in the community understands that this is not adequate. It is not going to be possible to provide emergency services in the case of a traumatic accident, an automobile accident or a heart attack, in this kind of circumstance.

I want to emphasize that Thessalon is a community that has an industrial base. There are two sawmills and a veneer mill located in that community, and we all know, unfortunately, that very serious industrial accidents can occur in these kinds of operations, and they have occurred.

1020

Thessalon is an hour's drive on Highway 17 from Sault Ste Marie. If we have a serious automobile accident, heart attack or industrial accident, in the wintertime particularly, it will be impossible for a resident of that area to reach hospital in time in the Sault. It's just impossible.

Both Thessalon and Richards Landing are retirement communities. People made decisions, life decisions, on the basis that there were hospitals available. Elderly people sold their homes in Sault Ste Marie, or in some cases in parts of the United States, and moved to St Joseph Island and to the North Shore because they were assured there were hospitals located locally. If they had a heart condition, they knew they were within five minutes by ambulance of a hospital with emergency care. We have no assurance of that now under the 1996-97 operating plan for the Sault area hospitals that was approved by this minister.

In response to pressure in southern Ontario, in the Bruce Peninsula and elsewhere, the minister said he was going to set up a policy review for access to quality hospital care for residents of small rural communities, and I welcome that. But what's happened with it? It seems to have gone into a black hole in the ministry. We haven't heard anything about it.

On top of that, when the decision was made to bring forward this kind of review and to assure rural residents of access to quality care, the minister made no commitment that it would also affect Richards Landing and Thessalon. I wrote to him and said: "If this applies to small rural communities in southern Ontario, will it also apply in the north? Specifically, can you assure us it will be applied at Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing and in Thessalon at Thessalon Hospital?"

The minister wrote back and said, "We've already approved the operating plan for the Sault area hospitals, which includes the closure of inpatient beds in those communities." This gives no assurance to the people of those communities. It's completely inadequate. I asked the minister to put a hold on the closure of those inpatient beds until the new policy was established and could be applied in Thessalon and Richards Landing, as it is apparently going to be applied in rural communities right across Ontario.

I call on the government now not to abandon the elderly, the residents, all the people of St Joseph Island and the North Shore, and respond to their needs. Assure them that they will have access to quality health care, quality hospital care, at the Thessalon Hospital, and the Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to express my very strong opposition to this resolution that I think would be harmful to health care in Ontario, not only this year, not only in what's going on across Ontario and across Canada this year, but in preparing for the future. I oppose this resolution because it has no plan to deal with the future of health care in Niagara and expresses no leadership.

What the government is doing is preparing for the future of health care in Ontario, to express some leadership as to how to deal with the new miracles of medicine, the new surgeries, the new procedures, that get people out of the hospital quicker and in better shape. Procedures that took weeks or months before, now can be done in a day.

How do we prepare for the aging senior population that will require more health care in the future and this bubble of baby-boomers entering into their fifties? How

do we prepare the health care system to adjust to those needs, to prepare for that 21st century of health care? I would contend that it would be a negligent lack of political will not to make changes, not to proceed and to make our health care system better, to put money into priority areas, into community care to adjust for these seniors, to take advantage of the medical miracles.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): And long-term care.

Mr Hudak: Long-term care, as my friend from Durham East says, is another good example.

The previous governments employed a method that was basically across-the-board cuts without any planning, without any coordination of where these cuts should come from, which resulted in bed closures in almost every hospital across Ontario, but left in its place the same administration, the same \$100,000 salaried administrator, the same kingdoms.

But where were the cuts? The cuts were in the front-line care, in services to patients, and left an inability to adapt to the medical advances to prepare our way for the 21st century. That was no plan and in fact showed a distinct lack of political will.

What I would say this resolution is asking us to today is to go back to square one, go back to the old NDP and Liberal methods, to not coordinate this — the mess they would have had health care in if they were on this side of the House. Instead, we have a plan. Mr Kennedy's resolution names a number of things that he wants to see, which the government is doing.

It's a transition. Transitions are always difficult in a number of areas, pulling into the 21st century, but necessary. I think Margaret Thatcher once said that if you have no direction, it's easy to go whichever way the winds are blowing. We certainly see this here. A transition is difficult to move into the future, but they want to take advantage, to exploit this and move us back to square one instead of advancing us and taking advantage of things that are out there.

The plan is already under way: reinvestments in priority areas in Niagara, like the Rehabilitation Foundation for the Disabled, \$535,000 in Niagara to help physically disabled adults; \$98,000 for the Alzheimer Society in the Niagara region, to adjust to those needs, those priority areas; Anagram, an excellent institution in Niagara to provide long-term living activities and supervision for adults with brain injuries.

Also, rural health care in Niagara region, where I am from — a very difficult transition period — rural health care to attend to those needs in the small communities: The government understands and believes that small communities are different, that the small community hospitals play an important role, and in developing rural health care policy we will adapt to those needs to ensure that access to emergency services — a priority in Port Colborne, a priority in Fort Erie and a priority in Grimsby — is met.

I oppose this resolution very strongly because it would take us back to square one. This government has a plan, an excellent plan, to bring Ontario's health care system into the 21st century. If we accept this resolution, we would do no better than previous governments that would

not make the tough decisions to modernize our health care system. We are prepared to make the tough decisions to move into the 21st century, with sensitivity to the small communities and priority areas, but we will make the tough decisions to provide better health care for young people, for seniors, for women, for everyone across Ontario.

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to my colleague's resolution this morning. I think it describes the elements of a deep and widespread concern that many people have about these issues. As health care is evolving, the health care system must change as well, but the changes that are brought about must also be allowed to evolve at a natural pace, to guarantee that no one's interests are trampled in a drive to impose change for its own sake.

As a result of the government's agenda, the Health Services Restructuring Commission is poised to wreak havoc on communities and the services on which they have come to depend. The release of the commission's report in Ottawa-Carleton raised the red flag in this regard for the francophone community. Their experience can be taken as a lesson and an example to all communities which are defending their own hospitals in their own communities.

The commission's report makes it glaringly obvious that its fact-finding was extremely circumscribed and limited. It missed entirely a crucial segment of the whole picture of the life of this province, a reflection of the problem with top-down management, where what you get is the illusion of control and the reality of chaos.

1030

It is so disturbing to me that with the stroke of a pen the government can destroy what has taken years to build, like the Montfort. Other hospitals have grown up in their own communities over many, many years and become integral parts of their unique cultures. Surveys have shown that people are extremely attached to what they consider "their" hospitals, and for good reason. Like the Montfort, which has survived and flourished for 44 years, these institutions have developed through the vision, effort, courage, determination, and financial and volunteer contributions of their communities. These are not just bricks and mortar. They represent the work of individuals who have come together to build a community resource that is a source of pride and a symbol of continuity. To take that away is to do real damage to foundations we have built upon.

Our health care system is a highly prized part of our national identity, something we are extremely proud of. But health care is not just a concept; it is a reality. That reality can be secured in the quality of our institutions. These institutions are not negotiable; they are where we work, come together and grow as a people. They bind us together. Dismantle these institutions and you profoundly affect the nature of our society.

For a culture like that of Franco-Ontarians, which is our historic minority, the effect is much more profound. If you take away our institutions, you take away our culture, our history, our hope and aspirations, and drive them underground.

Ontario has never been a homogeneous province. Even before the influx of nations that followed the French and English here, this province offered unique circumstances and challenges to the people who settled over this broad and varied landscape. Every corner of this province, every town and settlement, has its own needs that defy scientific analysis, that have a human face.

If we would only trust that communities are naturally driven to finding creative solutions to their problems, we could return government to its proper role: supporting the decisions of those who live with their circumstances every day, who instinctively know the answer to the question of what should be done. Communities know. Make them full partners in the process of change. They are our best chance to make sure everyone wins through-out this ongoing process of change.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I also appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak on this important issue. I also, with my colleague from Algoma who spoke before me, want to go on the record in thanking the member for York South for bringing this timely issue before the House so that we could all address it in some meaningful way, because I don't think there's one of us who serves here on behalf of our constituents who isn't in some way concerned about the implications to our communities flowing out of the very negative impact of the cuts to health care imposed by the government of the day. I would suggest that even the members of the government, if they were being honest and representing the view of their constituents, would be standing up today and saying the very same thing we are.

Lest it be thought that this is simply a political exercise, a chance for us in opposition to get up and do our opposition thing in being critical of the government, I today want to share with the House and with those listening some thoughts from some of the people out there who also share the same concern. I have some letters with me from some constituents that I want to read into the record so that you know what it is that the people in my community are saying. I carry their message to this House and I try to present it as sincerely and as honestly as I can.

I also want to quote, or put into the record, some comment from the report that was made to the standing committee on finance in the pre-budget consultation by the Ontario Hospital Association, a group that I think came before us with some great courage in being critical at this particular point in time of the government and the direction it's taking and the way it's going about the restructuring of health care in our province.

This is from the OHA: "The government's current policy towards the restructuring of hospitals and the health system as a whole is seriously flawed and must be fundamentally changed before irreparable damage is done." I suggest to you that in some instances irreparable damage has already been done and it's going to take a tremendous effort by everybody involved to recover from that damage in some communities. "Unless changes are made, the people of this province will face reduced access to care and the quality of that care may decline significantly. This must not be allowed to happen."

When the OHA came before the committee, I was representing the New Democratic Party there. I asked them why they weren't willing to go the extra step and actually accuse the government of having done irreparable damage and accuse the government of having already reduced access to care and quality of care in the province, because we know, those of us who are in direct contact with people who have had to access hospitals or health care in our communities, that in fact is what has happened. They said they felt the presentation they were making was already somewhat over the top and a break from the tradition of the OHA as it came before standing committees of the government and it wanted to have all of its partners on board when it made this statement. In making this statement, they were confident and comfortable that it represented the view of all the people in their organization representing hospitals across this province.

They also went on to say:

"A group of experts on hospital funding have carefully modelled and analysed the impact of the further cuts that are proposed for 1998-99. They have concluded that, even with aggressive utilization management, savings from clinical efficiency and significant organizational consolidation, the hospital industry will not be able to achieve the \$1.3 billion within the three-year time frame without affecting access to, and quality of, health care services."

They are very critical of what's already been done and they're suggesting that if it continues the damage will be further and more serious and will negatively impact the already reduced ability of people to access and quality of care.

I have a couple of letters here that were written to the Minister of Health from constituents in my community that I think other people should be aware of, and perhaps themselves take up the task and put pen to paper and write the minister as well. Here's one that was written to the Minister of Health and the Premier.

"I am writing this letter to plead to you, our Minister of Health and Premier of Ontario, to help solve the problems with our health care system.

"We must push for better health care. Our hospitals are deplorable, not through the fault of our hardworking nurses, doctors, staff etc, but through the gross, stubborn negligence of the Ontario government. As for Jim Wilson and Mike Harris, how can you even think of having the term 'Honourable' in front of your name, when no honest, true efforts are being made to protect this service?"

"I have watched Parliament on local TV and have also personally attended. In my opinion Mr Wilson has no concept as to what the health care system is all about. His stumbling and bypass comments are not worth listening to. You have heard how some people hold their jobs because of their mouth muscle only. Well, in my opinion Mr Wilson should be ousted immediately, as he serves no earthly good as Minister of Health. He is truly bluffing his way, which is quite evident watching him.

"I, as well as all senior citizens, am becoming very, very upset with the system and if something is not done soon only God knows what will happen. Because of your 'prominent title' I am sure your family will not suffer as much as the 'ordinary citizen.'"

"Election time is not far away, and I for one can hardly wait."

This is signed by Zita Moynan from Sault Ste Marie, a constituent of mine.

Just one further letter before I wrap up here this morning, because I think it's important that people get a sense, get a flavour of what people are feeling and saying out there. This is to myself about the health care system and it goes like this:

"I am on a letter writing campaign to protest the severe cuts to our health care system in the north.

"I have written to the Premier and Mr Wilson with specific complaints.

"We cannot afford less care; we need more.

"Closing hospitals, cutting services, laying off nurses, training kitchen staff to do nurse work does not mean an improved health care system, in my view. I am a retired RN.

"The present government campaigned on a policy of not destroying our health care or education system.

"Do what you can to make them keep these promises."

This is signed by a Mrs Bertolo out of my community.

I really don't have to say a whole lot more. I will certainly be supporting this resolution when it comes time to vote.

1040

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I wish to address this resolution because the government of Ontario is creating a concrete plan for better health care, one that puts the patient first, puts people first. This is a new vision that takes us into the 21st century and beyond.

It will be an integrated system, as proposed in this resolution. This vision is one in which all professionals, doctors, nurses, nurse-practitioners, technicians, pharmacists, rehabilitation and long-care services will work together to provide services for all.

Our vision for Ontario's health care system of the future is one in which patients are provided with the right care, at the right time, at the right place, a health system that will be there for everyone in Ontario when they need it.

In my riding of Norfolk, people are talking about the future of health care, and I wish to offer quotes from an in-depth series written by journalist Margaret Land in our local Simcoe Reformer.

Dr John Thorpe, chief of staff in Norfolk General Hospital: "I have faith the restructuring committee is going to do the right thing. Further, the restructuring exercise will show people don't need to be as dependent on hospitals as they currently are."

Dr Gerry Rowland, president of the OMA, is also from my riding, a constituent: "The current state of Ontario's health care system is the end result of 10 years of decline," and we all know who was in power during those 10 years.

Mr Paul Mailloux, chief administrative officer of both the West Haldimand General Hospital in Hagersville and Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Dunnville, is also quoted in our daily newspaper. Yes, they did combine administration of these two relatively small hospitals. Mr Mailloux says: "The region's hospitals have been downsizing and restructuring for years. Downsizing actually

came about due to advances in medical technology," technology which includes laser techniques and laparoscopic surgery, to name just two.

Ms Cathy Chisholm is director of our local VON services and is quoted in the Simcoe Reformer: "We can't afford to see hospital spending increase the way it did about four years ago. Community care is less expensive and it is every bit as good, if not better, as care in a hospital. People get better quicker at home. Unfortunately, people get very attached to bricks and mortar, but bricks and mortar do not heal people."

These are some of the things that experts are saying in my riding.

A further point: Mr Harold Schantz, administrator of Norfolk General Hospital, says, "Budget reductions started during the days of the social contract under the New Democratic Party." I see there are no NDP members in the Legislature at this point. I might add that there were no reinvestments during that time; that was a straight cut to health care.

Currently, Ontario spends more dollars per person on health care than almost any other place in the world. However, people have told me that their health care dollars aren't being spent as wisely as they could be.

All this has been compounded over the past two years as the federal Liberal government has cut \$2 billion in health care transfers to Ontario. Since taking office, the Liberal government in Ottawa has cut health care and education transfers by 40% — \$6 billion cut so far nationally, but government program spending by only 2%.

Bob Huard, our seniors' representative from Norview Lodge, has said, "People are scared." There's no need to be scared, but with resolutions like this one and with the way the opposition parties are playing politics with this issue, I wouldn't expect anything else. The opposition parties are trying to cover their tracks. They can cover the visual sign all they like, but we can see the bad management that went on in the 10 years previous to this government. They can't cover that.

The vision and the changes we are implementing include the creation of some 4,000 new jobs at the community-health-care level, new jobs and opportunities for nurses as announced yesterday, for example, nurse-practitioners and others in the health care system. This is our vision for Ontario's health system for the future, and together we can make this vision a reality.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I wanted to take the opportunity, first of all, obviously, to offer my support for the resolution, but also to address some of the comments that were made by the government members, because I have participated in a reconfiguration plan; I have been part of a very difficult process in our community, where we tried to show leadership, where we tried to reinvest, where we tried to get into a new era in health care.

I was amused by the statement, obviously the new government slogan, "The right care, the right time, the right place," when they forget the last: "the right price." That's what's driving this government.

The member for Niagara South spoke eloquently about the future of health care and has a shared vision that none of us can disagree with, but let me tell you, the actions of

the government betray the rhetoric. He spoke of leadership. There's been no leadership. I say to the people in Thunder Bay and to the people in Ottawa and the people in Toronto and every community where the restructuring commission goes: They are not reinvesting.

They have not kept their word to Windsor. In Windsor, we made a tough choice: We closed two hospitals in exchange for reinvestments in a range of community-based services and new health care services, and one of the first acts of this government was to throw out the recommendations and not act on them.

Yes, the rhetoric about reinvesting in the new health care is good. But I say to the members of the government: Don't buy in to everything you hear from the Ministry of Health. I say that no woman in hospital who gives birth to a baby should be released in less than 24 hours. That's crazy. If you think there's not a problem in our hospitals today, just go to an emergency room, be it in Windsor or Niagara or Toronto.

These are difficult questions. If you take the time to participate in the discussions around reconfiguration and new services, you will find that the leading experts in the world differ on what appropriate bed levels are, what appropriate care is. The decisions become very, very qualitative and very subjective.

I submit to you, when you go back to your communities, understand that the decisions to close hospitals being made today will have a long and lasting impact. When you talk to the experts, they will tell you, be very careful and leave yourself flexibility, because we can't accurately project future needs.

I finally would like to say that if you're true to your word about reinvesting, throw away the rhetoric and start doing more than talking about it. Don't close hospitals before you open those new services, because you've done that in Windsor.

To the people in Thunder Bay and Ottawa and London and Toronto, don't believe them. They have not fulfilled their commitment in our community. They're going to close your hospitals. You'll be left with less service and you'll be left holding the bag with a health care system that can't meet your very basic needs.

1050

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): In the time left for me, I want to make a couple of comments. I hear the Minister of Health and the Premier talk about increasing health care spending next year to \$18 billion, talking as though that's a huge increase in health care spending.

When you consider the demographics of this province, not only is the population growing, but you have more older people. If you add into that the increased cost of the high technology of health care today, you have a situation in which, if you were to keep the health care budget at a frozen level, you would be in effect decreasing spending on health care by, I would think, as much as 10% a year. The Minister of Health and the Premier seem to forget that.

That's why many of us support the restructuring of the health care system. In my own community the Health Services Restructuring Commission is reducing the number of hospitals from three to one. I, personally, do not have a problem with that as long as the money that's

saved in closing those two hospitals and going to one — you're not talking about one year's saving but over the years — as long as those savings are put into community-based care, long-term care, reinvested in the local community from which the savings come. If that's done, then a lot of us would be quite happy to see the health care system restructured in a civilized way so that we can get on with providing good health care to the people of this province.

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): Health care is a serious issue for all residents in Ontario. Many of us are familiar with a heart or a cancer patient who must await treatment and patients requiring non-institutional and institutional long-term care. Meanwhile, as a result of the actions, and in some cases lack of action, on the part of the members opposite, we have hospitals with empty rooms which are not available for patient care but for which we continue to pay the cost of upkeep, heating and, in some cases, staff costs.

In fact, previous governments closed about 25% of acute care hospital beds without taking any steps to restructure hospitals. The need to reallocate funds currently tied up in administration, bureaucracy, duplication and waste is immediate and should be apparent to all of us. As you know, it was the Peterson Liberal government that began discussing such a plan, but it was also the Peterson Liberals who failed to act on that plan.

As we have stated from the beginning, Ontarians must have access to the highest-quality care in the right place at the right time. That has always been and will continue to be the goal of this government. We also recognize that some regional and demographic differences must be considered in making restructuring decisions. We know that appropriate care, access and economic considerations are of primary importance.

This government continues to address the needs of northern, rural and underserved areas through such initiatives as the underserved area program, the \$70-an-hour fee for physicians in northern and rural communities and the pending rural health care policy.

It is also the responsibility of individual communities, in partnership with the local district health councils, to work together proactively to prepare a model for the Health Care Restructuring Commission's consideration. As I have stated before in this House, in order to have a prosperous future we must not only accept change but take a leadership role in implementing it. Locally created solutions are the best option for our communities.

I have worked diligently and extensively with the South Bruce-Grey Health Restructuring Alliance. As a team, we will continue to work within the framework of the process available to us to ensure that the excellent health care provided by our exceptional health care professionals in Bruce and Grey continues. We are also addressing the need for integrated service delivery and are working towards providing this as a part of our plan for the restructured health care in our community. My suggestion to all of you is to build your own solutions. Don't wait and hope that someone else will do it for you.

At the same time, the alliance and the people of Bruce and Grey recognize that the health care funds must be reallocated to those services that everybody needs.

Obviously the members opposite do not understand. Additional new resources do not exist to allow us to stop finding savings in our hospitals before integrating services and implementing the reinvestment strategies that we all need. These changes must be undertaken concurrently and that is what this government is doing.

Community care access centres are an important aspect of health care restructuring and, as of today, there are 26 CCACs up and running in Ontario. CCACs will improve access to all long-term-care services, provide better coordination and assessment and ensure that clients have appropriate care. In addition, CCACs will purchase the highest-quality service at the best price.

We have also made an outstanding number of reinvestments in our health care service to date in cancer care, neurotrauma, cardiac care, dialysis and kidney transplants, mental health, long-term care, diabetes care, MRIs and breast cancer screening. These are just a few of the areas that this government has reinvested millions of dollars in.

In conclusion, what concerns me most about this resolution and others like it is that the motivation behind it is merely political and only serves to emphasize that the member for York South and his colleagues are not interested in participating in a process that was initiated by a Liberal government in the first place.

We cannot and will not stop the health care restructuring process in Ontario. It is a difficult and challenging undertaking which explains why previous governments were too weak to see it through. This government has the fortitude and the vision and we know that it is the right thing to do for all Ontarians. That is why I will not be supporting this motion today.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am especially pleased to follow the last speaker from the government party on this very important motion that we have before us today. I will be supporting it, as will be the Liberal caucus.

We recognize and have since the beginning what was just proved to us by the member for Bruce. The one thing she said that was absolutely true was that we do not have the resources to reinvest while not cutting existing services. That, friends, is exactly the point. This government has found the resources to give their instalments of the tax cut.

I am guessing we are going to have more of a tax cut announced in the following budget. At the same time, as you —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Hear, hear. Hope so.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs Papatello: — not having the resources for health services, which you clearly admit to —

Mr Guzzo: David Peterson provided it. Why don't you like David Peterson?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau will come to order, please.

Mrs Papatello: — you do have the resources to give up various tax cuts.

Where do you think the money is coming from? As I travelled along Lesperance Road last Saturday afternoon with Gary McNamara, the Liberal candidate in Windsor-Riverside, he clearly heard at door after door after door

from seniors concerned about having to pay for drug costs. Where are our health services? Let me quote the member for Bruce: "We don't have the resources to ensure health services because we have to cut health services from everywhere else in order to give you any, maybe some time in the future." That is exactly what the member has admitted to today and that is exactly what we disagree with. I suggest that all those people in Windsor-Riverside told us on Saturday that we expect our taxes to be used for good health services. That is what the people of Ontario say.

When that woman in Newmarket met Mr Charest yesterday, she looked at him square in the eye and said, "After Mulroney and after Harris, me being a good Tory, I'll never vote Tory again." That woman in Newmarket said that because health services are failing in Ontario, thanks to the Mike Harris government. Why? Because they are admitting that there are no resources for health services —

Mr Guzzo: How about Chrétien's cuts? He's giving them back now.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order.

Mrs Papatello: — that they also admit that they're prepared to borrow money to give the tax cut. I think that's just a terrible thing.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a second. The member for Ottawa-Rideau, please come to order. Sorry, go ahead.

Mrs Papatello: I had an interesting question that was put to us. Gary McNamara was quite surprised to hear it put in this way. An elderly person said to him, "How many months in a year?" Well, he said, "There are 12 months in a year, of course," and they said, "Will someone tell Mike Harris there are 12 months in the year and, if there are 12 months in the year, why have the seniors now been asked to pay again three months short of the time that their annual fee for that drug coverage was charged?" Why three months early have they been asked to pay again?

So may I tell you that as soon as you find a PC candidate in Windsor-Riverside, make sure that PC candidate has the answer to how many months in the year, because I'm telling you, they feel as though they have been ripped off for three months of coverage. It's bad enough that you instituted user fees to seniors. Why, when Mike Harris came to just the curb of the airport during the last campaign, didn't he say, "We're going to charge user fees to the seniors in Windsor-Essex county"? He should have said so and he should have said so in the rest of the province.

1100

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's quite obvious that the health care policy of the Harris government is dictated by the 20-something whiz kids from the Fraser Institute who worship at the idol of a tax cut for the rich and forget about those who require government services by means of hospital care.

Members of the Conservative caucus cannot extol the virtues of the Common Sense Revolution here in this House and then go back home to their ridings and tell people they're going to save their hospitals, because the

Common Sense Revolution and its tax cut really dictate that there are going to be hospital closings.

We all remember, however, that Mike Harris, during the last provincial election campaign, said, "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." Indeed that's what Dr David Foot, author of Boom, Bust and Echo, said in his advice to the Premier for the Niagara region, "Don't close hospitals," because in the Niagara Peninsula we have the largest per capita group of people over the age of 55, meaning we're going to require hospital care in great numbers.

I can recall no Progressive Conservative candidate, including my friend Tim Hudak, who mentioned the closing of hospitals or gave any inclination there would be the closing of hospitals under a Harris administration, yet that's exactly what we're seeing across the province.

I will be standing up in this House and elsewhere to maintain Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, Port Colborne hospital, Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital; not some trumped-up treatment centre with bells and whistles on it that they try to disguise as an emergency centre, but rather full hospital care which the people of all those communities deserve.

I implore the government to forget the rest of the income tax cut, which is going to benefit the richest people in our society the most, and instead to invest that money in our hospitals and our health care system in Ontario. I think you'd find a broad consensus for doing so and I would be among the first to applaud the government for initiating that particular action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe there are 27 seconds left.

Mr Hudak: Speaking for this side of the House, this side of the House stands resolute to walk into the 21st century with a stronger system of health care, and while we're walking down that path, to take care of the sensitivities of the small communities, and access, especially to emergency care, in Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Grimsby and these communities.

We stand resolute for a better health care system. We believe in funding priority areas like kidney dialysis, MRI, breast cancer screening, and this resolution will take the money —

The Deputy Speaker: Time has expired. The member for York South, you have two minutes.

Mr Kennedy: I want to first of all thank my colleagues in the Liberal caucus and members of the New Democratic Party for speaking to this resolution.

We heard instead unfortunately from the government members — we appreciate their presence here, but what we in Ontario have learned today is that a certain amount of brainwashing has taken place on the other side of the House.

What we heard were slogans. We heard, "Right place, right time, right price." What we didn't hear was, "Care for sick people in this province." We didn't hear recognition that there are problems this government has initiated: in Port Colborne where they're shutting hospitals; in Ottawa where they're shutting some of the most efficient hospitals going, with no explanation to the local community.

The only mechanism to examine this so-called plan is to talk to the same people, the same unelected commission that makes the decisions. It doesn't, as the members opposite have said, give us the future; it gives us the past. It gives us a past where people paid for their own care, where people died in their own homes, because now they're being kicked out of hospitals quicker and sicker.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Kennedy: It's being done nicely —

Mr Guzzo: Who closed it?

Mr Kennedy: — it's being done with professors and it's being done with academics, but it's not being done —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, this is the last time. If you don't want to behave, I'll have to name you. Member for York South.

Mr Kennedy: It is not being done with care, and that's what we're asking of the members of this House today: to bring back to this system a plan that puts care back into health care. Instead, we got slogans and rhetoric, no understanding of people like Mr Tymchyshyn who had to wait five hours in the emergency ward, and left and collapsed and has been in hospital for weeks since; of other people who have been waiting, like Bryan Broome, 12 to 15 months for joint surgery because it's not sexy, it doesn't have a photo op for the Premier to come up and announce money.

The Premier has taken \$600 million out of the health system he hasn't put back. He can announce as much as he wants; he's not spending the money and people know that.

I say to members opposite, if you don't vote for this motion, we'll regret that. Your constituents will regret it, but the people of Ontario will be worse off because you have let their confidence erode for no good reason.

FINGERPRINTS AND PHOTO-IMAGES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to rise today with respect to my private member's resolution, notice of motion number 48:

Whereas the province of Ontario's justice system is founded on the principles of fairness and equality; and

Whereas police have the right to take fingerprints and photo-images of persons accused of crime; and

Whereas there may be inconsistencies of policy among Ontario police services, where some will destroy an innocent person's information upon request while others wish to retain it; and

Whereas there is no legal requirement that a police service destroy the photo-image and fingerprints when a charge against a person is withdrawn or dismissed; and

Whereas the province of Ontario has an obligation to be fair to its citizens and does not intend to keep the fingerprints and photo-images of all Ontarians on file;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should ensure that the rights of innocent persons are protected by establishing guidelines for fair and consistent policies throughout the province

for police services, regarding the fingerprints and photo-images of innocent persons.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Tascona: With respect to the resolution, the first paragraph deals with Ontario's justice system being founded on the principles of fairness and equality. I'd like to refer the members in the House to section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which involves life, liberty and security of the person and which reads: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice."

The police have the right to take fingerprints and photo-images of persons accused of crime. We're dealing with adult persons. The Identification of Criminals Act, which is a federal statute, gives the police service — and we're dealing with municipal police services — the authority to obtain fingerprints and photo-images when a person is charged with a criminal offence.

The taking of the fingerprints and photo-images of the accused adult person, as authorized under the Identification of Criminals Act, does not violate section 7 of the charter. That's a fundamental point. What we have here is a right to take the fingerprints and photo-images of the person who has been charged.

This resolution deals with once the person has been charged and has been acquitted or the charges withdrawn; we want to deal with the destruction of the photo-images and the fingerprints. What's important to know is that there are inconsistencies of policy among the Ontario police services.

In my riding of Simcoe Centre, there are two police services. You have the South Simcoe Police Services Board and the Barrie Police Services Board. Both of them have a policy to destroy the records, the fingerprints or photo-images, when the individual who has been accused has the charges withdrawn or the person is acquitted. That's not the same with respect to other police services across the province.

What's fundamental when you deal with the Identification of Criminals Act is that the act is silent with respect to the destruction of photo-images and fingerprints when a charge against a person is withdrawn or they are acquitted. Since it's silent, what we must deal with is the development of policies, because the provinces are given, under the Constitution, the administration of justice.

We have the Ontario Provincial Police, who have developed a policy with respect to the destruction of photo-images and fingerprints when an individual has the charges withdrawn or is acquitted. I'd like to state that policy of the Ontario Provincial Police, which is that the fingerprints and photo-images of adult persons would be destroyed upon request if the charge is withdrawn, stayed or dismissed. The person has the option of witnessing that destruction, in fact.

1110

Because the Identification of Criminals Act, which is a federal statute, is silent, the Ontario Provincial Police have developed a policy with respect to the destruction of

the photo-images and the fingerprints in the situations I've been discussing.

What I'm dealing with here are the municipal police services, and with respect to one part of the resolution, "Whereas the province of Ontario has an obligation to be fair to its citizens and does not intend to keep the fingerprints and photo-images of all Ontarians on file," it begs the question of whether, if that is done without a specific procedure or guideline, that would be in violation of section 7 of the charter. There is a need to address this issue with respect to establishing guidelines across the province.

When you look at the Young Offenders Act in comparison to how we deal with adult persons in the criminal forum, the Young Offenders Act specifically has the procedure, and this is a federal statute, to deal with the destruction of records. I quote from that act.

Section 45(1)(a) states, "Where the young person to whom the record relates is charged with the offence to which the record relates and is acquitted otherwise than by reason of a verdict of not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder, on the expiration of two months after the expiration of the time allowed for taking of an appeal or, where an appeal is taken, on the expiration of three months after all proceedings in respect to the appeal have been completed."

Section 45(1)(b) states, "Where the charge against the young person is dismissed for any reason other than acquittal or withdrawn, on the expiration of one year after the dismissal or the withdrawal."

So under the Young Offenders Act we have a specific procedure to deal with the destruction of records, whereas under the Identification of Criminals Act we do not.

We have a void, and that's what we're looking at here today in terms of police services at the municipal end. The Ontario Provincial Police have developed a policy for adults. What we're looking for is the municipal police services to develop guidelines consistent across the province to deal with such matters.

The goal of this resolution is to protect the rights of innocent persons who, having been charged with a criminal offence, have the charge dismissed or withdrawn. The resolution calls on the province to establish guidelines for municipal police services to follow with respect to maintaining fingerprints and photo-images, records that are on file, because of what's happened under the Identification of Criminals Act.

Currently, because the Identification of Criminals Act is silent with respect to the destruction of records, we have a discretion on the part of municipal police services to determine how long they will keep an innocent person's fingerprints or photographs on file. This has caused inconsistencies across the province, as I have stated. In my riding, there is an automatic destruction of the records when the charges are withdrawn or that person is acquitted.

The need for consistent guidelines is made even more obvious when you look at the Young Offenders Act, where they have specifically addressed this within the legislation, whereas the Identification of Criminals Act is silent on that. It has resulted in the province having to develop policies throughout their municipal police

services, and also with respect to the Ontario Provincial Police, with respect to the destruction of records.

Also, there are parts of my riding where the police service is provided by the Ontario Provincial Police. To be fair, there is a consistent policy with respect to the Ontario Provincial Police, but not with respect to the municipal police services throughout the province.

Looking at the system, since it's supposed to be based on fairness and equality before the law, which is enshrined in the charter, section 7, I believe we owe it to our citizens to ensure the rights of innocent persons are protected. That's what's contained within the spirit of the resolution and in fact the exact words used in the resolution.

What we in the Legislature have in front of us today is a resolution that I believe addresses a concern not only with respect to developing consistency across the police services within this province, but also addresses the rights that are enshrined under section 7 of the charter to ensure, as the charter states, that the life, liberty and security of the person are protected.

Certainly the police have the right to identify the person who is being charged and the methods they use are photo images and fingerprints etc. But when you go to the reverse side, once that is taken and the individual is proven innocent through acquittal or the charges are withdrawn, the charter has to come in place also, and I think it has to be observed with respect to ensuring the life and liberty of the person. That's what we're dealing with here, to make sure that the guidelines that exist across the province, which are different for each police service across the province, are addressed and made consistent.

That is the thrust of the resolution. I believe it's not only proactive, it's consistent with our charter. I think it's consistent with the principles we stand for in this province. I thank you and I hope other members support this. I look forward to the debate on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let me just say how glad I am to be here today to listen to the discourse that this member gave. Once again, I know that in this place every now and then we lose faith in the political process and we lose faith, maybe, in some of the actions the government has taken. But here's a back-bencher of the government who has made a statement — he could have made it in a minute and a half but he took 10 minutes to do it — that actually made complete and total sense. I haven't said that too often in this House but I totally concur with him on this issue. It raises a number of interesting questions, though.

The first question I always have when we're debating these kinds of issues during private members' time, especially when they're raised by a government member, is: Why is this here? I assume the eminent member is a prominent member within his caucus. He surely could have raised this matter with the Solicitor General, who is in charge of all the police departments in the province or at least is the overseer of them. This matter could have been dealt with internally by the government or it could have been dealt with a lot more quickly. Why is this here?

I realize that maybe he didn't get anywhere with the Solicitor General or the Attorney General. Taking some of the actions these departments have taken lately over the last two years, I can well understand that. I would suggest to him that he would probably get a lot further if it was not only a motion of the House but if he also got some direct input and direct say with the Solicitor General into this issue. I think we'd get a lot further if he would get the endorsement of it so that the Solicitor General could pass this around to the various police departments throughout the province and get them to accept these kinds of guidelines.

The other thing I find rather unusual is for this kind of motion to be brought forward by one who is a member of, I think everyone would agree, an ultra-right-wing government, almost a Reform government in this province. This is not usually the type of issue that right-wingers are interested in, the whole notion of civil liberties and civil rights and that somebody's rights may actually be affected by police action etc. It's a very refreshing change to actually see that happen.

The third point I'd like to make deals with this whole notion of fairness. I believe that about four or five times during his 10-minute speech he talks about, "The province of Ontario has an obligation to be fair to its citizens." I can tell you that we in this party certainly agree totally with that. I don't think this government has been fair in how it has dealt with the most vulnerable in our society, whether we're talking about welfare cuts, whether we're talking about the tremendous disarray that the family support plan is in, whether we're talking about the lack of funding for adult education. We had a demonstration here in the House yesterday by people who want to change their ways of life by getting further education so they can get the jobs that are out there, and that's being denied to them currently because of the lack of funding in continuing education. I don't think that's fair, and there's a lack of fairness with respect to the non-funding of junior kindergarten programs, and you could just go on and on, or a lack of any kind of local input in the hospitals that currently are being closed throughout this province.

So when we're talking about fairness to citizens, it is certainly very important —

Interjection.

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Mr Gerretsen: He talks about fairness, that the Ontario government has an obligation to be fair to its citizens. I'm saying that all the other actions this government has taken over the last two years certainly indicates, to my way of thinking and to a great number of people in this province, that they have not been fair.

Having said that, I will support the member's motion. I would suggest to him that in the future, rather than bringing these things here, other than for the publicity value, and I think there's a value to that, maybe if he spoke directly to the Solicitor General or the Attorney General, they could deal with these kinds of matters in a much more deliberate and more efficient and quicker fashion.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I want to commend the member for Simcoe Centre and the member for

Kingston and The Islands for being able to speak three minutes on this resolution. When you read the resolution, and I think the member for Simcoe Centre was stretching it a bit when he was explaining it, what it says is in the "therefore," the implementation part of the resolution. It says that "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should ensure that the rights of innocent persons are protected by establishing guidelines for fair and consistent policies throughout the province for police services, regarding fingerprints and photo images of innocent persons."

It doesn't say they should be destroyed if charges are dropped or they are acquitted. It doesn't say that in the "therefore," so I don't know what this resolution means.

In the "whereases" there are some concerns expressed, but when it comes down to the "therefore," all it's asking for is guidelines. Don't you want to change the legislation? And if you do, that's not a guideline. I don't understand why it's worded this way.

I must say that —

Mr Bob Wood (London South): It's a federal law.

Mr Laughren: Well, call for a change in the federal law. If it's a federal law that needs to be changed, call for that, but you're talking here about the province "establishing guidelines for fair and consistent policies." While it may sound fine for the member for Simcoe Centre to be calling for fair guidelines on policies on fingerprints and photo images, he's a member of a government that has completely botched, for example, the way in which we should be treating young offenders, completely botched the killing of a native at Ipperwash, completely botched that issue. Then to come into this House and pretend that you have concerns as a government for innocent people, we find it a bit hard to take. I, for one, am not going to spend any more time on this resolution.

Mr Bob Wood: I will attempt to be very brief as well. The position of the Ministry of the Solicitor General is that we're not going to take a position on this resolution because we want to hear the views of all members of this House and the views of the general public. We are confident that we will receive many good ideas from everyone.

I'd like to offer a couple of brief observations and I will then invite input. I would like to point out to the House that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, law enforcement and records (managers) network, LEARN, developed a guideline within its document, Guidelines with Respect to Pardons Conditional or Absolute Discharges and Withdrawals/Dismissals. So some work has been done in this area and members may wish to take a look at that document.

The Ontario Provincial Police policy states that "the fingerprints and photo-images of persons be destroyed upon request if the charge is withdrawn, stayed or dismissed." The person has the option of witnessing the destruction.

All members may not entirely follow the legal position. The identification is done pursuant to federal law. What is done with the records is a matter of provincial policy. What the member for Simcoe Centre is inviting the government to do is adopt a province-wide policy.

We've invited comment and I'd like to suggest a couple of issues that those interested may wish to address. If we are going to have a general policy, should there be exceptions to it? For example, if the police have data from a suspected serial sexual offender, should that be an exception to the general policy? If there are going to be exceptions, what control should there be over the exceptions?

Basically we are looking forward to the opinions of members of the House and the public. We know there are going to be good suggestions and we appreciate the input. Thank you.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I am very pleased to be able to rise in my place today, I think for the first time in a long time, to support a private member's resolution from a government backbencher. This is an incredible shift from the tenor of most of these private member resolutions we get that are sort of like, "Let's hang the kids if they're bad," and things like this that we dealt with a few months ago. I said some nasty remarks about that bill. This is very refreshing, to see something that actually respects people's civil liberties.

We have a criminal justice system, and like all mechanisms of humankind, none of them is perfect. We make mistakes from time to time and people get caught up in these systems. I think we must remember the incredible intrusive powers that we confer upon our police and our jailers on behalf of society to take care of the criminal justice system. Once somebody is either acquitted or the charge is dropped, then absolutely all the evidence gathered towards pursuing a conviction against that person should be destroyed. I think there should be no question about that.

To answer the parliamentary assistant's question about whether there should be any exceptions: No, there should be no exceptions at all. Regardless of whatever crime you were suspected of having committed, if you've been found innocent, you've been found innocent. It doesn't matter what the crime was, whether it was shoplifting or murder, if you were found innocent of the crime, therefore you're back to being a regular citizen with entitlements to all the freedoms that our government and organizations confer on people. So there should be no exemptions at all; those documents should be destroyed.

I'm just here to say this morning that I support this resolution.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I thank my colleague from Simcoe Centre for allowing me to address his resolution this morning on establishing guidelines for fair and consistent policies across this province in an effort to stave off the "Big Brother is watching" fears. The people of this province need to know the law enforcement process dealing with fingerprints and photos; legal advisers need to know the process; officers on the job need to know the process; our courts need to know the process. The difficult issue with respect to handling of this very personal information is there is not a clear right or wrong answer.

Obviously police agencies need to assist in preparing guidelines to establish a uniform province-wide procedure and policy in the collecting, recording and storing of fingerprints and photos. Records of information must be

kept, whether in print form, on film or by electronic means. Photo-images, which are photographs, negatives or digital computer images, must be stored and protected. These records must also be readily available to investigating officers when needed. Often it is these records that assist a police investigation to apprehend a suspect and it is these same records that assist a crown attorney in dealing with charges against a suspect in court. The confusion enters into the situation when various police service boards have various policies.

1130

This becomes evident when speaking with OPP officers on the job. In contacting OPP officers, the first officer I spoke of said that she understood that if a record needed to be destroyed, for whatever reason, her experience had been that the complainant's lawyer wrote a letter asking for the records to be destroyed. If acceptable, the OPP then replied to the request in writing, inviting the complainant to witness the destruction of their fingerprints and photos.

The second officer contacted was a duty sergeant, and he was a former officer with the city police department. His understanding of the process was from the perspective of the former police service mandate he had worked under before being absorbed by the OPP.

The third officer contacted explained all photos and fingerprints were sent to the RCMP, since this national police agency has the data bank. This officer explained that if the complainant wanted their records destroyed, they would have to contact the RCMP.

Three different officers, three different opinions on the process. It is for this reason the member for Simcoe Centre has put this resolution before us today.

I recognize that there are various reasons a police record should not be destroyed, even following what we think is the closing of a case. Despite what those reasons may be, a person found not guilty by the courts should be able to ask for their records to be destroyed. There should be a procedure in place clearly understood by all parties involved. The outcome of the procedure could be varied, depending on the circumstances.

There is a need for a clearly defined procedure process which recognizes possible needs to retain certain records for future investigations or court cases. A clearly defined procedure process could also protect the integrity of a police investigation.

For example, the Law Enforcement and Records Network produced a set of guidelines for pardons and conditional or absolute discharges. These kits are available through the clemency and pardons division of the National Parole Board. The pardons kits contain an application form and relevant information for distribution to the public. A similar kit could be made available to innocent persons. The rights of those individuals could then be protected through establishing guidelines for fair and consistent policies throughout Ontario.

I feel we need to develop the legal requirement to destroy the photo images and fingerprints of persons where a charge against that person has been withdrawn or dismissed. We as legislators have an obligation to be fair to our provincial citizens. Keeping fingerprints and photo images of innocent persons is totally unnecessary.

This resolution provides police services with provincial standards, giving individuals respect and peace of mind. I will be supporting this resolution today because I believe it will assist our police officers at each step of a police investigation, and it will give the courts a basis to safeguard evidence. Most of all, I support this resolution because I believe it will protect the rights of individuals in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): This resolution brought forward by the member for Simcoe Centre calls for the province to establish guidelines for the police services to follow a consistent process in maintaining and dealing with fingerprints and photographs in the records of people whose charges against them are either withdrawn or dismissed.

There is an obvious need for consistency in the system. Currently, the decision to keep or destroy an innocent person's personal information is made by each police services board or by each police station, resulting in an unfair and unequal treatment of innocent people in Ontario. The member for Simcoe Centre referred to a possible violation of section 7 of the charter, which protects the rights of individuals, and those rights can only be interfered with in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

I'd also like to call your attention, Mr Speaker, and the attention of the members to section 11 of the Charter of Rights, which reads as follows: "Any person charged with an offence has the right...to be presumed innocent until proven guilty."

That charter right gives innocent people the right to be treated equally to other people in the province, and one of the rights of people in Ontario and in Canada is to not have their photographs and fingerprints available in the police stations unless they are either charged with a criminal offence or have been convicted of a criminal offence.

I support the arguments of the member for Simcoe Centre. As a member who practised criminal law for 20 years, I would like to point out that people charged with an offence have no choice but to submit to the process of the Criminal Identification Act, by either section 502 of the Criminal Code or section 510 of the Criminal Code: Whether a person is charged and required to appear through a summons or an appearance notice, or a promise to appear, that person must attend for the purpose of identification, for fingerprinting and photographs, and if he is ordered to attend and fails to attend, he will be charged with a criminal offence and a warrant will be issued for his arrest. It's a very serious process that people have to endure.

The motion before us is that if that person is found not guilty or the charge is withdrawn, those records of photographs and fingerprints should be processed in a manner that complies with the Charter of Rights, in a manner that is consistent across the province.

The dangers of not having a procedure for either destroying such records or proceeding in a consistent manner in dealing with such records are great, in the sense that we have no idea of what happens to those records when the charge is withdrawn or the charge is dismissed. Some police services boards may have a policy that the records

are kept, others may have a process that the records will be destroyed only if the person makes a request, and yet others may destroy such records.

The dangers in a criminal process — and I have encountered such dangers in my practice — is that such records can be used for a photo lineup. A photo lineup is a procedure where a composite, usually of eight to 12 pictures of individuals, is used to have witnesses identify a possible offender. What if a police station takes some of these photographs from individuals whose charges have been withdrawn or dismissed and use them in the collage that makes up a photo lineup for witnesses to choose a possible offender? The danger is that an innocent person may be fingered, may be accused of a crime he didn't commit, just by mistake.

Others will say that the danger is not that great, that the courts will ensure that the identification process is a fair one, but I can tell you, from my practice, it has been established that such dangers are great. Lots of people are convicted on wrong identification. I recall a case, the Beck case, around the turn of the century in England — and that case has been studied by lawyers — where someone who was innocent was found guilty on a misidentification. There were so many cases in the 1970s in England that resulted in the miscarriage of justice that a commission was put together. Lord Devlin led a commission to deal with the identification process.

Those are the dangers that arise from such a process, when the police office may have those pictures and they may somehow end up in a photo lineup and innocent people may be found guilty.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Tascona: I'd like to thank the members who are in support of this resolution, in particular the members for London South, Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings and Mississauga East, for speaking on this.

Certainly there seems to be a general, broad-based support for this resolution. Obviously, the government of the day is interested in protecting innocent persons and ensuring that their rights are protected.

I'd just like to reply to the member for Kingston and The Islands, who seems to suggest that the members from the government don't really have a role in private members' business. Obviously, this is what private members' business is: bringing matters to the attention of other parties and all the members of the Legislature to ensure that things are not only known but action suggested. Action is being suggested with respect to municipal services across the province to develop consistent guidelines.

We're dealing here with a federal statute, the criminal identification act, which this government obviously doesn't have the direct power to change, but we are responsible for the administration of justice throughout the province. That's something we should take seriously, that this government does take seriously: protecting the civil liberties and the rights of innocent persons.

The member for Nickel Belt didn't take a position on this particular resolution; I don't know whether he supports it or is against it. But I can honestly say that the

NDP doesn't have a monopoly on compassion. The concern that has been demonstrated by this government for fairness and equality throughout the province with respect to its citizens I believe should be respected; our record certainly demonstrates that we have done that.

In closing, I'd like to say that this resolution speaks for itself, and I look for support of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Section 96(f) of the standing orders says, "When the time allotted for the consideration of private members' public business has expired or at 12:00 noon, whichever is later, the Speaker shall put the question to the House." Therefore, I have to wait until 12 and will suspend the debate until then. The bells will be rung at 5 to 12, and then the question will be asked.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1201.

HEALTH CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Will the members please take their seats. We will deal first with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Mr Kennedy. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. No? Do you want to deal with it now? Afterwards? We'll deal with it afterwards.

FINGERPRINTS AND PHOTO-IMAGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 74, standing in the name of Mr Tascona. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

We will now vote on the first ballot item. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

HEALTH CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Kennedy has moved private member's notice of motion number 52. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until your names are called.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Patten, Richard
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Curling, Alvin	Laughren, Floyd	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until your names are called.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pettit, Trevor
Brown, Jim	Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sheehan, Frank
Danford, Harry	Johns, Helen	Skarica, Toni
DeFaria, Carl	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Young, Terence H.
Fox, Gary	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 20; the nays are 35.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters related to private members' business having been debated, I will now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**SILENT VIGIL**

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It was 79 Fridays ago that the Sisters of Providence of St Vincent de Paul began holding vigils at Kingston's city hall. They have since been joined by other citizens from the community such as the Kingston Action Network.

The vigils are silent but send a powerful message of solidarity with the most vulnerable in our society, especially women and children, who are bearing the brunt of relentless government cuts to social, health and education spending.

Normally these vigils take place at noon. Sometimes protesters draw even more attention to their cause, as they have, through forming a candlelight circle around city hall and by displaying a six-foot cross on Good Friday. The occasional evening vigil aims at allowing more people to participate.

On behalf of the sisters, I would like to invite members of the public to join them at city hall in Kingston tomorrow, May 2, at 5:30 pm.

In the words of Sister Pauline Lally, "Your peaceful presence at this demonstration will help urge governments to consider the causes of poverty and unemployment, for more things are wrought by non-violent solidarity than the world dreams of."

Governments, stop attacking the weak, the vulnerable, the unemployed, the old and the young in our society, and instead build a society of harmony, goodwill and compassion, especially to the less fortunate in our society.

ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise again on an issue that is close to the heart of every citizen of my community of Sault Ste Marie, and should be close to the heart of every citizen in this province, as this government moves forward in lockstep to privatize anything that

moves or creates a little bit of revenue for the government in their wont to turn it over to their private sector friends.

I'm talking today particularly about the lottery corporation. I have in my hand the annual report for 1995-96 and it's an excellent testimony to the people of that corporation and the work they do — the effectiveness and the efficiency of the operation.

Let me just flip through the book and highlight some of the things that are said: "We develop and operate lottery schemes on behalf of the provincial government. Our vision is to be the recognized leader in the gaming industry in Ontario." In fact they are the recognized leader across North America. "Almost 97% of our revenue is returned to the people of Ontario." What else do you want? "New standards in performance, efficiency and profitability," "Setting standards for success," it's all here, a blueprint for a corporation that is beyond reproach and speaks very clearly and directly to the integrity of the product they deliver.

Can this government guarantee for one second that when they turn this over to the private sector that integrity will still be there and the kind of money that is now flowing will continue to flow?

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): Mr Speaker, May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. Sexual assault is a pervasive form of violence in our society that devastates the lives of too many women. While we can measure related hospital costs, treatment costs, lost wages and missed work hours, we will never be able to measure the pain that forever changes a survivor's life.

As I speak, Dianne Cunningham, minister responsible for women's issues, is launching Sexual Assault Prevention Month in St Catharines and is announcing a community victims initiatives program grant of \$13,750 to the Women's Place. This grant will fund an anti-stalking initiative.

As well, this month Minister Cunningham will announce a number of new initiatives aimed specifically at preventing sexual assault and the Ontario women's directorate will launch its website, an information and linkage station to resources and educational materials.

It is important that government educators and community organizations work together to ensure that Ontario's youth are made aware of the effects of violence. Thanks to a lot of hard work from Partners for Change, a multi-sector partnership initiative, our government will participate in the launch of a multimedia education campaign on violence prevention specifically targeted at youth.

The contribution of women to this province is invaluable. Together we look forward to celebrating the day when violence against women is stopped and when we need not designate a month in the name of sexual assault prevention.

PORT COLBORNE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "Certainly, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals."

With those comforting words, Conservative leader Mike Harris lulled Ontario residents into a false sense of security, as Mr Harris and his Conservative candidates made no mention of closing hospitals in the Niagara region or elsewhere in Ontario.

A large delegation of Port Colborne residents is present today at the Legislature to deliver 12,000 postcards to the Ontario government demanding that their hospital, the Port Colborne hospital, not be closed, in keeping with the solemn promise of Mike Harris on television in May 1995.

I support this worried delegation and the people they represent. Port Colborne hospital should not be closed and should not be radically changed and simply disguised as a hospital. Those Conservative MPPs who stand in the House and extol the virtues of the so-called Common Sense Revolution cannot go back to their home constituencies and play the role of the local hero who will defend the community hospital. The Harris plan, calling for generous income tax cuts for the rich, means hospitals will close, regardless of the Premier's promise.

The Niagara region has the largest percentage of seniors of any area in Canada and will need all its hospitals, including the Port Colborne hospital, to serve the needs of its aging population. Mike Harris should abandon his plan to make the rich richer with a large tax cut and should restore adequate funding to our hospitals for years to come. Our people deserve no less.

SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I just came from a rally outside the Attorney General's office which was attended by my colleagues Peter Kormos and Shelley Martel. There were representatives from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Employment Standards Work Group, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the Ontario Health Coalition, the Ontario Federation of Labour, Bad Boss Hotline, OPSEU.

All of these representatives were there to talk today about Women and Children Last! in terms of this government's agenda. I know I'm not allowed to show it, so I will describe it to you. It's a start-to-finish spiral of what has happened to women and children in this government. It's only a few pieces of this government's agenda.

It starts, "Tories destroy the family support plan; Tories cut the social assistance payments by 22%, reduce the shelter allowance portion and restrict eligibility; Tories attack co-op and social housing, remove rent controls and reduce tenant protections;... Tories smash workers' rights, undo workplace protections and disband the Workplace Health and Safety Agency" — I'm skipping a few now — "Tories soften pay equity, scrap employment equity and reduce harassment protections, calling them 'red tape';... Tories reduce subsidies, deregulate child care and cancel junior kindergarten" — it goes on and on.

It's time for this government to wake up and listen.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): I rise to call to the attention of all members that this Sunday, May 4, is Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day.

It is a day on which all Ontarians reflect on the horror of the Holocaust, during which more than six million Jews perished in the Nazi death camps in Europe.

Yom Hashoah is a time to consider the depths of human cruelty and savagery that were unleashed on an innocent people whose only crime was their religion, their adherence to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. It is also a time for us to renew our common resolve and commitment to ensure that no further Holocaust will ever occur again.

As is done at Yad Vashem in Israel, Yom Hashoah also reminds us of those who risked their lives in trying to protect their Jewish brothers and sisters. As Jewish tradition states, they are the righteous of the nations for their heroism.

On Sunday, May 4, may we all take a moment to remember the martyrs of the Holocaust and to pray for the survivors of that terror and to join in the struggle against the evil of anti-Semitism and racism. Shalom.

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MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I wonder what the Minister of Natural Resources has against the Boy Scouts. Last year he made the Boy Scouts pay rent for the land they camp on. This year he seems to be in a more generous mood and he agreed to contribute \$40,000 towards the Canadian Scout Jamboree that will be held in Thunder Bay this summer.

According to the minister, it was decided that the money would go towards the purchase of a unique commemorative T-shirt that would foster a positive image for northern Ontario. It sounds great, but here's the shirt. It seems the minister's idea of fostering a positive image for northern Ontario is to have his own name across the chest of 12,000 Boy Scouts.

It is scout policy not to advertise for anything or anybody, not even a minister who wants to buy \$40,000 worth of personal publicity. So the minister has apologized, sort of, and is now paying for his name to be covered over by a crest. At least, I hope —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. You're out of order. Please keep the shirt down. It's a demonstration. Member.

Mrs McLeod: I continue by saying that the minister has sort of apologized. He is now paying for the cost of having his name covered with a crest. At least, I hope he is paying, because he actually only paid for a —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich, I warn you to put that down and take —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Your time's up. Can you take that down from that chair, please.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): In the past several days I've been receiving copies of letters sent to the Premier by arts administrators and artists urging this government to maintain the funding for the Ontario Arts Council at its 1996-97 level for the 1997-98 fiscal year.

We all recognize that the arts are a vital expression of the soul of the people. The existence of Ontario arts industries is critically threatened by cuts instituted by the government. The Ontario Arts Council is the key institution for supporting the production and dissemination of artistic endeavours in Ontario and a key source of support for individual artists and arts organizations.

The accomplishments and investments in the last 30 years in the arts stand to be reversed by the fatal funding cuts, as we have seen in the last 20 months. The cut of 30% to the OAC along with the cuts to other programs by the Ministry of Citizenship have impacted severely on the province's arts and cultural sector. We all know that a strong and healthy artistic community is essential to the social and economic health of Ontario.

I'd like to quote from an article written by Victor Hugo, author of *Les Misérables* and parliamentary deputy, written in 1848. It's as timely today as it was then:

"It is my view...that the proposed budget reductions in letters, sciences and the arts are bad for two reasons. They are insignificant from a financial standpoint and harmful from every other point of view. Ignorance, ignorance is the danger far more than poverty. Lighting is provided in cities, where street lamps are lit up every evening at crossroads and in public squares. When will people understand that darkness can also overcome us in the moral sense and that we must light up torches for the human spirit?"

SCARBOROUGH FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to recognize the outstanding achievement of two Scarborough firefighters. Recently the Scarborough Optimist Club recognized two Scarborough firefighters, Geoffrey Reeves and Douglas Arsenault, as the firefighters of the year for 1996. Geoffrey and Douglas were recognized for their quick response and actions in reviving a Scarborough resident who had suffered a heart attack on November 23, 1996, with the use of a defibrillator.

On November 23, 1996, Scarborough pumper crew number 5 responded to a medical emergency in Scarborough. Upon arrival, they found a 69-year-old male absent of any vital signs. Firefighters Reeves and Arsenault immediately attached the defibrillator machine to the patient and administered the first shock. The procedure was successful and the patient's vital signs were restored.

This is the first documented incident of a patient being revived as a result of the firefighter defibrillation program first introduced by Metro-area fire departments in September 1996.

The program, which is directed by Sunnybrook hospital, will see that every pumper in the Metro area will have a defibrillator machine on board and that the fire-

fighters are trained in the use and maintenance of the machine.

Results in other cities using firefighter defibrillators indicate that up to 25% of cardiac arrest victims can be saved with this technique.

I ask the members of this House to join me today in commending the actions of First Class Firefighter Geoffrey Reeves and First Class Firefighter Douglas Arsenault.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to read to you standing order 32(a): "A minister of the crown may make a short factual statement relating to government policy, ministry action or other similar matters of which the House should be informed."

Standing order 32(c) says, "Two copies of each ministerial statement shall be delivered to opposition party leaders, or their representatives, at or before the time the statement is made in the House."

Standing order 32(e) says, "Following ministerial statements a representative or representatives of each of the recognized opposition parties in the House may comment for up to a total of five minutes for each party commencing with the official opposition."

Earlier today I received a press release put out by the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, the minister responsible for women's issues. Paragraph 2 of that news release says this: "Isabel Bassett, MPP, St Andrew-St Patrick, is today detailing the wide range of government initiatives that will support victims of sexual assault on behalf of Minister Cunningham, Isabel Bassett will deliver a statement to the House to raise community awareness of Sexual Assault Prevention Month."

I normally don't do this, because I understand the rules do not permit us to comment on absent members, but in this case it's relevant because the member for St Andrew-St Patrick is not here. However, the member for Bruce made that statement, it appears to me, on behalf of the minister. She referred to the fact that it was Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

Normally on this day the minister responsible for the government and opposition parties make statements in the House to talk about this extremely important issue. The minister is not here today. I was expecting some kind of unanimous consent so that we can, each of the opposition parties as well, comment and make statements about Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

What I would request of you now, Speaker, because the member for Bruce made a statement on behalf of the minister, albeit during members' statements, is that the opposition parties have the opportunity to respond to that statement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let me be clear: I don't have any authority to grant opposition parties time for responses to statements. That's not within the realm of the Speaker.

The point of order you're raising, I take it, is that the member for Bruce was reading what you deem to be a ministry statement.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): She made an announcement.

The Speaker: Okay. You are seeking unanimous consent of this House —

Ms Churley: No.

The Speaker: Clarification, the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Further to the point of order: I'm not sure I understand the point you made with respect to not being able to grant the five minutes. The point we are raising is that the member for Bruce, as was set out and anticipated in the minister's press release, made a statement on behalf of the minister. You will note in the statement she made it was not just generalities; she referred to and announced a specific grant to Women's Place, a women's centre. We believe that is in the nature of a ministerial statement and, by the rules, either should not be allowed or the parties should have an opportunity to respond.

Given that a minister of the crown has actually put out a press release stating that this statement would be made in the House on behalf of the minister, it does take on the nature of a ministerial statement. I would hope you would actually be able to rule that or that the government at this point would agree that it was a ministerial statement.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): The statement that was made by the member for Bruce is a member's statement, pure and simple. The member for Bruce has concern with regard to this matter —

Ms Lankin: The press release says that on behalf of the minister —

Hon David Johnson: What the press release says is immaterial. The fact that's before you today is that the member for Bruce has concern with regard to this particular topic. The member for St Andrew-St Patrick has not made any statement today. Members are within their full rights to make statements during members' statements. The member for Bruce has availed herself. The members from the NDP could have made a member's statement today if they chose to. Indeed —

Ms Lankin: We did.

Hon David Johnson: Well, there you are, so they've had their opportunity already, and members of the Liberal Party could make a statement during members' statements. That's, pure and simple, the situation, that the member is entitled to make a member's statement.

1350

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): There is absolutely no question that the press release that is done by the Ontario women's directorate, with the minister's name heading up the press release, is virtually identical to the statement that was made by the member here in the House today. It is a pretence to suggest this is anything other than the government making a ministerial statement and using a member to do that, and in doing that, denying the opposition members their five minutes' opportunity to respond on the subject.

I really do feel, if it's not a violation of points of order, it is certainly a violation of the privileges of the members of the opposition.

The Speaker: Thank you. Let me just read to you from Journals of the Legislative Assembly 1987-88-89, 34th Parliament, first session. Speaker Edighoffer said:

"I think it's appropriate that in future parliamentary assistants should not make statements using this procedure if the proposed statement is one that could just as well be made by the minister. In other words, parliamentary assistants can still make statements dealing with special matters for which they have special responsibilities, but that statement should not constitute an announcement or a series of facts that should be more properly situated in the statements by the ministry section of our proceedings."

I read this statement from the member for Bruce and I honestly can't read it any other way than back to you.

"Mr Speaker, May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. Sexual assault is a pervasive form of violence in our society" etc. It goes on to say on page 2: "As I speak, Dianne Cunningham, minister responsible for women's issues, is launching Sexual Assault Prevention Month in St Catharines and is announcing a community victims initiative program grant of \$13,750 to the Women's Place. This grant will fund an anti-stalking initiative."

Then you go on the say, to the member for Bruce, "As well, this month, Minister Cunningham will announce a number of new initiatives aimed specifically at preventing sexual assault, and the Ontario women's directorate will launch its Web site, an information and linkage station to resources and educational materials."

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Breaking the rules.

The Speaker: Order. This would appear to me to be a minister's statement. If the minister is out making this statement in St Catharines, it is inappropriate for a member for stand in this place using the minister's name to make the same statement. I can't see how in any way, shape or form this can be considered a member's statement when the minister herself is in fact out there in the province making the same statement as a ministry statement.

I would suggest to the members of the government that if there are going to be statements made, they must be ministry statements. If they're going to announce initiatives, you have to announce those initiatives during the proper process, which is ministry statements, and allow opposition the opportunity to respond in the five-minute process.

Having said that, I have no power to authorize a five-minute response for the opposition, or a minute-and-a-half response, or any such thing. All I can do is caution the government members, when making their statements, to be careful they're not making ministry statements. With the greatest respect, to the members of the government side, to the member for Bruce, this seems fairly clear to me to be a ministry statement.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, I respect your ruling. I would, therefore, given that you feel you cannot compel the government members to allow the opposition —

The Speaker: Are you seeking unanimous consent?

Ms Churley: Yes, I'm seeking unanimous consent.

The Speaker: The member for Riverdale is seeking unanimous consent for a five-minute response for the opposition. Is there unanimous consent? No, there is not.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am wondering if something that I have here —

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: No, this is something I have to show the Speaker — whether this violates the rules of this assembly. As you can see, there is a shirt that has the minister's name on it.

The Speaker: Order. With respect to the House leader, I assume the member is standing on a point of order that this somehow violates the orders of the House because the minister's name is on it. I honestly can't even begin to understand where in the standing orders that could possibly be a point of order.

Mr Bradley: I would rise on a point of privilege, then, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, then, a point of privilege.

Mr Bradley: The point of privilege is this — and the only reason I held this up was I didn't want you just to take my word for it, I wanted you to know that the name of the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, is actually on this shirt — that the government apparently paid a one-third amount of the money to produce these shirts. What I'm worried about as a matter of privilege is whether government funds were used to promote a particular minister; in other words, that government funds that were provided, and I think appropriately, for the production of this shirt were on some kind of condition with somebody in the government that the minister's name be on it. I don't know whether that's true or not.

The Speaker: Let me say to the member for St Catharines, it's not that long ago when construction projects were being built in this province where the minister's name would be put on the billboards. It was stopped recently. I don't think there's anything I can go to, any rule that says the minister can't have his name on a T-shirt. If you want to take this up as a question during question period, that's probably a really good question, but it isn't a point of order and it's probably not a point of privilege.

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, it's not a point of privilege. I appreciate your input.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, I think there's a very simple way to resolve this. The Minister of Natural Resources can simply pay back the money —

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Yes, and they're both out of order. Member for St Catharines, I heard your point of order; it didn't qualify. I heard your point of privilege; it didn't qualify.

Mr Bradley: I think you misinterpreted —

The Speaker: I will accept written submissions from you on behalf of that particular point of privilege.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RED RIVER FLOODING

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we on all sides of this House have been watching with a mix of

concern, sympathy and indeed helplessness as the worst flood in more than 150 years spreads havoc through the southern part of our sister province of Manitoba.

The strength and community spirit of Manitobans during this very difficult time is an inspiration, I believe, to all in our country. Over the last few days the hardworking people in towns like Emerson, Morris and Ste Agathe have been struggling to cope with unpredictable waters. Now the overflowing Red River threatens to affect the city of Winnipeg with the same kind of indiscriminate destruction.

I know many Ontarians — individuals, businesses, institutions — have lent their support to the people of Manitoba through hard work, money and other donations.

I personally communicated with Premier Filmon offering the assistance of our government and our resources. Officials in the Ministry of Natural Resources are also in close contact with their counterparts in our sister province of Manitoba.

I believe as all 130 of us in this Legislature return to our ridings this weekend, we all in a non-partisan way can lend a hand in Ontario's collective efforts to encourage family, friends and constituents to do the same. Donations can be made at any Royal Bank branch. I know that here in the greater Toronto area food and clothing can be dropped off at any fire station in Metro Toronto, Mississauga or Brampton, and in your towns and your communities other arrangements may be being made.

I know that the thoughts of all members in this House, and indeed all Ontarians, are with the good people of southern Manitoba as we extend to them our support, our encouragement and our prayers.

1400

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): This afternoon the Premier, several of my cabinet colleagues and I met with the negotiating team from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to inform them that we are accepting most of their proposed amendments to the Who Does What legislation.

Before discussing the changes I would like to remind the honourable members of our goals in the entire Who Does What exercise.

The first was to reduce taxes by ending the spiralling cost of education in this province. That was the first priority. The second goal was to reduce taxes by disentangling the duplication and delivery of services between the provincial and municipal governments. The third goal was to bring tax fairness to the people of this province, regardless of the municipality in which they live.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Hon Mr Leach: Since announcing the Who Does What package, several municipalities, organizations and individuals have expressed legitimate concerns about the impact of two decisions: changing the funding formula for welfare and requiring municipalities to be responsible for funding long-term care.

When our original package was announced, I challenged AMO and other organizations to come up with alternative solutions and ideas. Our only condition was that any new package meet our three goals.

These proposed amendments will address many of the concerns raised by the groups and individuals about this government's intention to end waste and duplication between the two levels of government. They met that challenge and provided us with new ideas that, I am happy to say, our government is prepared to adopt. In fact, we are accepting almost all of the proposals put forward by AMO.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Sudbury, Windsor-Walkerville, Yorkview and Fort William, please come to order. I'd like to be able to hear this statement. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It became clear during our consultations that AMO had a proposal that met our objectives without the province assuming the total cost of education. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario proposed that the province assume half the current education costs paid by residential property taxes, not all of them. Furthermore, AMO proposed that the province, not individual school boards, set a province-wide residential property tax rate for education.

After consulting with my cabinet colleagues, we concluded that this was an acceptable compromise because it will permit the province to cut education property taxes in half and to limit future increases in education taxes. It is the province's intention to set a rate that collects half the current \$5 billion in residential education property taxes. Once set, that rate will be frozen.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

While accepting most of AMO's proposals, the one we did not accept was the proposal to permit boards of education to increase residential property taxes annually by up to 5%. That is contrary to this government's policy of reducing unwarranted tax increases.

The shift in responsibility for education costs now allows the province to address two other concerns. This government heard concerns expressed by many municipalities and individuals about the impact of funding changes to welfare and long-term care. I am pleased to report to this House that, based on the recommendations of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the government will not proceed with its proposal to share welfare costs on a 50-50 basis.

Furthermore, to end the confusing system of differing cost-sharing arrangements, the province will fund 80% of all general welfare benefits and child care, with municipalities responsible for 20%. Welfare administration costs will be split equally between the province and municipalities. The province will retain full responsibility for long-term care, and to assist in the transfer of social housing to municipalities, the province will provide significant capital investment upgrades, which will be confirmed in next week's budget. On critical issues of social services, it's only right and proper that there be a shared responsibility among the different levels of government.

This decision does not in any way change decisions to disentangle other duplicated services between the province and its municipal partners.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members for Lake Nipigon and Sudbury — members, please come to order.

Hon Mr Leach: I fail to understand why the opposition would be laughing at AMO's proposal.

AMO and the government agreed on the proposed system of dividing responsibilities for policing, roads, public health and other services. This minister and this government said we would listen to anyone who came forward with a better idea. We didn't hear any from the opposition, but AMO did have some. We listened to the advice of our municipal partners and to the people of Ontario.

I would specifically like to express my appreciation to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for their thoughtful and carefully considered recommendations. This was, I believe, a good example of a government that, working with its partners, is willing to listen and to respond to positive, well-considered solutions.

I believe we have reached a compromise that allows the province to meet its goals, provides greater flexibility for municipalities and will benefit the people of Ontario by ensuring more efficient services, less duplication and waste and lower taxes.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Leach: Mr Speaker, I'd just like to point out to the members that the president of AMO, Mr Terry Mundell, has just come into the public gallery.

The Speaker: Responses.

1410

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I don't like to say that we told you so, but we told you so. If ever there was a screwup in the introduction of public policy in Ontario, this would be a case study.

The minister makes much of the fact that this is a new partnership struck between himself and AMO, but the fact of the matter is, had he properly consulted AMO and other groups throughout the province at the outset and had he listened to his own adviser, David Crombie, they never would have constructed this mess in the first place.

As soon as mega-week announcements were made we hit the ground running. We set out across the province and we met with various communities and we quickly concluded that what we had been saying in this Legislature was absolutely correct and, in particular, we were looking at an additional \$1 billion that was being downloaded on to Ontario property taxpayers.

Here are some of our findings, in case the minister didn't get them. We found that the Harris government made a serious mistake in putting long-term care, child care, social assistance, social housing, public health and ambulance services on property tax and you had to correct the mistake.

Second, we found that there's no doubt that most municipalities across Ontario will face dramatic increases in their property tax bill with at least an average 10% increase across the province. We told you so, Minister.

Third, we found that the Harris government's plan to provide funds for municipalities is only \$335 million to cover a likely \$1.3 billion in additional costs. We told you all of that, Minister.

Finally, we told you that the Harris government has been unacceptably secretive, and it continues to do that to this very day, with information that the municipalities need to provide a detailed assessment of the impact on their property taxpayers.

The minister tells us that his overriding concern here is that this be a revenue-neutral exercise, where our calculations today show us that we're looking at still somewhere between \$650 million and \$700 million which are going to be downloaded on to property taxpayers right across the province. This is not revenue-neutral. I've said it before and I'll say it again.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I want to ask the government members, I'll stand while you're heckling too. I want to be able to hear the statements of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the members for the opposition as well. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: When we raised these kinds of concerns before, I was told on countless occasions that I was wrong, that we didn't know what we were talking about. The fact of the matter is, we knew perfectly well what we were talking about because we were relying on municipalities across the province. We didn't invent this stuff. They're not some kind of an obstacle to be overcome. They're a resource to be tapped and that's something that you should have done from the outset.

Now we're supposed to take some comfort from the fact that municipalities will retain the privilege of collecting 50% of the tax that is going to be attributed to education in this province. But the problem remains, of course, that the province has now assumed complete control over education in the province. There is going to be no local accountability. We still don't know if those moneys collected are going to be put into education and, if they are, how they are going to be distributed. There is no guarantee of that whatsoever to date.

We hear that, out of the goodness of their hearts, they're going to contribute \$200 million to upgrade our housing stock in Ontario, which they are kindly transferring to municipalities. Estimates that we have had in the past put those costs somewhere in the range of \$1 billion, not the paltry \$200 million that they intend to contribute.

If I could sum up, I would say this: The government through this exercise has only confirmed what we have suspected all along. They are driven by ideology. There is an effort being made here to assume control over education. There was no genuine effort made whatsoever to consult people who were going to be affected by this.

We had public policy thrown into our faces, which was rejected by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, business organizations, the Financial Post, the Toronto Sun and the like throughout the province, telling this government that what they were about to do was to cause serious financial and social harm to our province. Let us hope they have learned a lesson.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): There are many pieces to this announcement that has been made today, and to fully understand it we need to move back about five months to get the full historical perspective. People will remember this government standing up in January and saying that the downloading of long-term care, the downloading of social assistance, the downloading of seniors' housing, the downloading of a host of other health care services was all going to be revenue-neutral. The government said it was going to be a wash. The only kind of wash it was, and is, is hogwash, and people across this province have started to understand that in spades.

What the government was trying to do is this: Virtually every democracy in the western world is wrestling with two problems. One is what to do with chronically high unemployment rates, 10% and 15%, which result eventually in people having to resort to social assistance. This government's solution to that problem was simply to say, "Throw it on the municipalities."

The second problem governments in the western world are confronting is what to do about the baby-boomers as they become older and need more health care. Every government in the western world is wrestling with that problem. What was the Harris government's solution? "Throw it on the municipalities." But they got caught, they got found out, and I say to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario: Good for you. Congratulations for work well done.

There is another piece to this. Do you remember the \$8 million in government advertising showing the fuse box and the wires going off? The government said this was about disentanglement. Well, let's look at it. As I look at what's going on here, there's probably more entanglement than ever. Social assistance is 80-20 on the benefits side but 50-50 on administration. That sounds like more mixup than ever. Then we go down to social housing and, get this, it says, "Delay, but put in some capital upgrades." That doesn't sound to me to be disentanglement.

Let's go to residential education taxes, because I suggest there's probably a minefield here. It's going to be 50% municipal, 50% education, and then if you read the fine print, it says municipalities are going to pick up some things that are better done at the local level. I wonder how much this government's going to try to push into that down the road.

There's no disentanglement here. There's more entangling here, and if anything, there's a lesson for the people of Ontario: Don't let Al Leach anywhere near your fuse box — nowhere near it.

I want to go on, because as I said initially, the real effort on the part of this government was to download a whole bunch of costs on to property taxes so the government would be able to stand back and say: "We gave you an income tax cut. The fact that your property taxes are going up is someone else's fault." That was the real political goal here.

People should not take too much solace in this announcement, because as I read the fine print, the province is still abandoning over 3,400 kilometres of Ontario's highways, still abandoning 3,400 kilometres on to municipal taxpayers.

It's interesting if you look at the province's balance sheet. It's as if the municipal support grant never existed. The municipal support grant is worth over \$666 million. The government simply omits even to mention it here. Some \$666 million is still being withdrawn, in addition to the 3,400 kilometres of highways that are being downloaded.

As well, the delay on seniors' apartments, the delay on housing for the disabled, the delay on other types of supportive housing is just that: It's a delay. It's still coming and it's still going to result in municipalities having to pick up a huge property tax issue.

I am pleased for the Association of Municipalities, but this is still going to result in higher property taxes for property taxpayers at the municipal level. I say to the government, for that part, shame on you.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): The government's handling of the minister's announcement on this, the first day of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, is one of the most partisan and crass moves I believe ever seen in this place. This is a day when normally the minister stands up and everybody, all parties, gets to speak about this very important issue. Shame on them —

The Speaker: Order.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I guess they weren't whiners after all, the municipalities.

The Speaker: Order.

1420

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Yesterday the member for St Catharines raised a point of privilege with respect to a memorandum issued by the Secretary to the Management Board of Cabinet relating to a motion for interim supply which was in fact passed by this House yesterday.

I wish to thank the member for St Catharines for raising this matter and the government House leader for submissions.

I've carefully reviewed the memorandum and observed that it is addressed to deputy ministers and would therefore appear to have a very limited intended audience. Whatever distribution it might have had beyond that would be impossible to determine.

It does appear to me, however, that its contents would be primarily of interest to senior managers in the civil service, because most of it deals with issues that would appropriately have to be addressed by them in the event that interim supply were not approved by the end of the month of April.

The issue that has arisen surrounds the choice of wording in certain portions of the memo that is subject to variable interpretations. This is the essential element that I believe gave rise to the point of privilege and it is what I wish to address here today.

Those whose vocation is the impartial service of the people of Ontario through the government or the Legislature of the province must always bear in mind their professional responsibility and obligation to reflect upon the proceedings of the Legislature in a manner which conveys no judgements either on the proceedings them-

selves or on the possible outcome of those proceedings. Such reflections must be temperate and balanced.

I would like to say that it is the subjective, equivocal nature of terms such as "regrettable," used in the memo with reference to a controversial political situation in this House and which has provoked this statement, that makes my point on the need for such communications to be worded in a way that carefully and pointedly obviates such possible misunderstanding. The unfortunate wording leaves the author open to the accusation of being critical of the legislative process which, especially given her position, would not be acceptable to me.

However, my interpretation of the memorandum in question is that it represents a prudent effort on the part of a responsible manager to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place to respond to and deal with a possible and imminent legislative outcome. While the use of certain words or phrases may reflect a judgement that might be questioned, and has been, it is because of my interpretation of the good-faith nature of the memo that I accord the benefit of doubt to the author.

While a reputation for impartiality and neutrality in the civil service is assumed, it must also be earned every day. As a result, again I want to caution the civil service to be aware of the foregoing and to exercise care in such written communications as the one before us. Because in my view the memorandum before us did not have among its purposes the attempt to persuade members to or dissuade members from a particular course of action in the House relating to the interim supply motion, I find the member for St Catharines has not made out a *prima facie* case of privilege.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. I want to return to the matter of Ipperwash, a matter of the utmost gravity to all members in this House, but especially of course to you and your government.

A number of key decisions were made by you and your government which we believe involve you and members of your government directly with the Ipperwash affair. We have obtained a copy of minutes of a meeting which had been attended by your executive assistant on September 5. At that time the minutes indicate that you considered a variety of options. A number of the options on those minutes have been blacked out. We understand that the option you chose was to ensure that the protesters were removed from the park as soon as possible.

That is just one of a series of questions which deserve to be answered, Premier. For that reason, once again, I'm asking you today to commit to holding a public inquiry at the earliest possible opportunity.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think I answered all those questions yesterday.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand the Premier's reluctance to get himself any deeper in this, but I think that answer is unacceptable to the people of this province.

Again, I want to be perfectly clear. I'm not asking for an inquiry to begin immediately. I'm asking that you commit today to a full public inquiry that would begin at the earliest possible time, a time that would not in any way jeopardize any legal proceedings that have commenced today or might commence at some time in the near future.

Here's another question that remains unanswered. The first nations claim that there was an ancient burial ground at Ipperwash. At the outset the position taken by your government was that there was no such valid claim to be made. Subsequently there was a change of heart in that regard. We want to know why that decision wasn't reached in the first place. If you're not prepared to tell us that today, Premier, again, commit to a full public inquiry at the earliest possible opportunity.

Hon Mr Harris: We accept the same question from yesterday, and the same answer applies.

Mr McGuinty: One of the things the Premier said yesterday was that we would have some kind of answers made available to the Ontario public at the appropriate time. My concern is that the appropriate time may be after the next election. I am questioning the Premier's commitment to get to the bottom of this very important issue that goes to the heart of his integrity and the integrity of his government.

Here's another question that deserves a response, Premier. The member for Lambton, a member of your government, was closely involved at the command post at Ipperwash. We know there were conversations between him and the police officials at the command post and your government. We need to know what was said, what directives, if any, were issued by you to him and from him to whoever else may have been there. Those are just some of the questions that deserve an answer.

Once more, given the nature of the questions that are before the public today, given the number of people who have a growing concern about this issue, will you not merely commit — that's all I'm asking you for — to a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Harris: The same answer as yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to continue with the Premier on the same issue, because so far you have said the OPP acted entirely on their own. We believe the government made fundamental decisions that fundamentally impacted on the outcome of this event. I will go on with the line of questioning of my leader.

You made another key decision, and that was that you would treat this not as a native affairs issue but as a Ministry of Natural Resources issue. That influenced the direction of the OPP. Why did you make the decision to not treat this as a native affairs issue? If you're not prepared to answer that today, will you ensure that you commit today to a public inquiry so we can get that answer out of you?

Hon Mr Harris: All the information will be public at the appropriate time.

Mr Phillips: I want to continue, because I think the public have a right to answers to these questions. The OPP are out to dry on this. I want to ask another question

of you, Premier. You said in this House, in response to a freedom of information request — we said we would like the files from your office on September 4, 5, 6 and 7. Here's your exact response: "There were no files" — in my office — "there were no records, because we had no involvement."

Frankly, there isn't anyone in the province who can accept that answer, that the day after a native person was shot and killed the Premier had no records in his office. His executive assistant was at meetings and was instructed to get back to the Premier with information on those meetings.

Premier, why did your office have no files on Ipperwash? And if you're not prepared to answer that question today, do you not agree that should be something that is answered in your public inquiry?

Hon Mr Harris: My office did not convene any meetings. Other offices did, and one person from my staff attended, and all minutes were kept by them.

1430

Mr Phillips: So there were no files in your office. I will continue to ask the questions that the public will demand answers on. Once again, you have said, and here is the direct quote: "The OPP operated with no government input, direction or advice," yet the morning of the shooting incident, September 6, the senior officer at the command post said, "The Premier and Solicitor General want to deal with this." Later on that same day, the commanding officer is asking your Conservative member, "is there anything from the Solicitor General?" The implication is clear that this wasn't something the OPP were simply doing completely on their own with no government input, direction or advice.

Again, are you prepared to answer that question, why would the commanding officer say those things, and would you not therefore agree that you have to —

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Following on court matters, I suppose somebody can determine who said what and why and when, and I know you don't want to jeopardize those cases.

I am prepared to repeat for you not only what I have said, that we gave no direction to the OPP as to how they would carry out their job, but furthermore, the commissioner of the OPP, appointed as I recall when the NDP were in power, one of the most respected law officers in all of North America, has confirmed to you on two separate occasions that there was no direction from this government to the OPP as to how they would carry out their duties.

Mr Phillips: The OPP commissioner has not confirmed what the Premier just said.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Speaker, because this is such a serious issue and because someone died —

The Speaker: Your question is to?

Mr Hampton: My question is to the Premier as well — we're going to continue to ask these questions.

Premier, you personally have said that the province wanted the occupiers out of the park. A government briefing note states, "The province will take steps to

remove the occupiers ASAP." There is no mention of the government trying to negotiate with the occupiers to come to a peaceful resolution. Your government made an application to the courts to obtain a simple injunction, but in doing so, your government chose the hard line over peaceful negotiations. Your government brought the full power of the courts as your first option rather than trying to negotiate peacefully, and once your government decided to apply for an injunction, a message was sent to the police that you wanted the occupiers removed from the park, with force if need be.

Who made the decision to move forward with an injunction rather than to try to negotiate peacefully with the occupiers at Ipperwash?

Hon Mr Harris: I honestly have to say I think you're making up some of this stuff, and when the court cases are finished, we'll be happy to supply all the information so we don't jeopardize another family and another life.

Mr Hampton: The information that I've read here all comes from the minutes and it's all on the public record, and I'll continue. According to court transcripts, on September 6, 1995, lawyers for the Attorney General advised the court that a motion for an injunction against native protesters at Ipperwash park would be heard the next day, September 7. The Attorney General confirmed that in this Legislature. He said, "There was an attempt made to ensure that there was notice given about the intention to obtain an injunction." That's in April 28 Hansard of this year.

What the Attorney General neglected to add was that at some point on September 6, 1995, the day of the shooting, the government changed its tactics. The government's original decision to give the natives notice of the injunction proceeding was stopped. You switched to an ex parte process, in other words, a process without notice. Why did you choose to go the hardball way, not to give notice to native people —

The Speaker: Thank you very much, leader. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: We switched nothing. You know not of what you speak. All the facts we're happy to have, once we don't jeopardize another family.

Mr Hampton: It's clear it's the Premier who doesn't know what he's speaking about; either that or he doesn't want to know, because in fact Mr McCabe, the government's legal counsel, admits — and this too is in the transcript, Premier — that the decision to bring a motion without notice, in other words to use the hardball process, was made on September 6, 1995, many hours before trouble started at the park. Many hours before anything happened at the park, the government had made its decision to go the hardball route.

I want to put it to you again, Premier: Who made all these hardball decisions? Who made all these decisions to really put it to the native occupiers instead of talking with them and discussing the situation and trying to negotiate a resolution?

Hon Mr Harris: All those matters we'll be happy to — you have most of the information. I'm just a little surprised that you say going to the courts and using the legal process is hardball. I thought that's the way you deal with these things.

Mr Hampton: I'll have to remind the Premier: Going straight to court, first of all, and not trying to discuss or negotiate is legal hardball. Going to court in a manner where you don't even give the other side notice, where you don't even give them a chance to be heard, is probably the nastiest tactic of all. That's the question here, Premier. Your government took a hard-line approach here from the beginning. As we read through the transcripts and as we read through the minutes that come from your meetings, it becomes more and more obvious: Your government took a hard line from the beginning, and if anything, you accelerated that hard line. Why, Premier? Why didn't you try to negotiate or discuss? These are all the questions that are unanswered. Who gave the orders to take a hard line?

Hon Mr Harris: I know the Attorney General has indicated the government direction was to seek an injunction in the courts. I hardly call that a hard line.

Mr Hampton: I'll read again from the Hansard transcripts. The Attorney General came here and he indicated that the original decision was to go and to seek an injunction, with notice, which would have given the native people at Ipperwash a chance to appear in court and a chance to be heard. Who knows, Premier? Perhaps a settlement could even have come of it.

But then Mr McCabe — Mr McCabe is a lawyer who works for the Ministry of Natural Resources, well respected — says in the transcripts that even before any trouble started, your government made the decision to take the hardest line possible, not to give notice to the native people, to go into the court without notice and ask for that injunction.

Why did you choose to take such a hard line? That's the question. Who gave the order? Why did you switch, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't recall switching anything.

Mr Hampton: I gather that the Hansard transcripts are all wrong. I gather that the court transcripts are all wrong. It seems we're into a quasi-reality here where only the Premier knows the reality and all the other transcripts and all the other statements by these people taken under oath are wrong. I say to the Premier, it's not that way.

Premier, this is why you need to commit today to holding a public inquiry, because your answers are completely at variance with the answers of other people who gave their evidence under oath. Will you make that commitment? Will you call the inquiry today? The inquiry can take place after criminal proceedings are finished, but there are too many unanswered questions. People need to know the answers to these questions. Will you call that inquiry today?

Hon Mr Harris: You asked that question yesterday. I know everybody will get the answers, not only the right answers or whatever the answers you want. You will find there is no inconsistency between anything I've said and the actual facts, and when the time is right we'll do that.

1440

The Speaker: New question; the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: To the Premier, also on Ipperwash. The Premier will know that on October 21, 1996, the govern-

ment went to court. I'm reading from the Ipperwash prosecutions:

"There are 23 people charged with the offence of forcible detainment." Those were the people who occupied the park. "The crown is withdrawing all of the charges" — the forcible detainment — "for the reason that there is no reasonable prospect of conviction."

In other words, you declared them innocent. Six months later, on April 1 — the day, I might add, that the OPP trial started — you were saying the Ipperwash group was breaking the law. In other words, you declared them innocent, you dropped the charges because there was no expectation they could be convicted in October, and then six months later you publicly declared them guilty. Why would you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I haven't declared anyone guilty or innocent.

Mr Phillips: "Ipperwash Group Was Breaking the Law, Premier Says. 'We felt there was an illegal occupation of the park.'" You then found out subsequently, Premier, that you were wrong. You had to drop the charges. You declared them guilty when they were innocent. Why would you do that? Why would you say on April 1 — I might add, the day the trial started for the OPP officer — when you had already dropped the charges in court, that they are now guilty?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member would know that neither I nor any politician was involved in either the laying or dropping of any charges.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Premier. In the absence of the minister responsible for women's issues, I am asking you, because you are the one who is ultimately responsible for the decisions of cabinet. I want you today to answer to the thousands of women who have asked your government repeatedly to stop sacrificing women. Today, as we noted earlier, marks the beginning of Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Your minister responsible is not even here and there is no announcement that will give comfort to the victims of violence and no real action on the prevention of violence and sexual assault.

Earlier this week, a coalition of rape crisis centres asked that in respect of Sexual Assault Prevention Month your government announce stable funding for rape crisis centres. They asked you to announce that you formally reject the McGuire report — remember that one? — and that you announce additional funding for anti-violence measures. We have not heard any of those today. Premier, when is your government going to make those announcements?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As a matter of fact, the minister is today making some of those announcements and several important initiatives are planned to be announced over this month: a community victims initiative program grant in St Catharines, being announced, I believe, today; a community victims initiatives program grant in Kingston, for the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres to create an Internet link for 34 sexual assault centres; a launching, through our

Partners for Change public-private sector work group, of a multimedia campaign of violence prevention specifically targeted at youth.

You're right. The minister isn't in the House today. The minister is actually out in the communities making these announcements.

Ms Churley: When I hear your response and other ministers' responses to these questions, I have to wonder whether you or your government have any sense of morality or values whatsoever. You stand and reannounce things over and over again. We had a good look at the press release from your minister today. She didn't have the courtesy to even come in the House and give the opposition a chance to respond.

You should know that this press release today is not fooling anyone. It contains the announcement of a ministry Web site. I'm sure another 1-800 number gives a lot of comfort to the victims of sexual assault.

The other part of the announcement is merely the allocation of grants that have been previously announced, something for which your government is becoming very well known. You haven't announced one new thing today.

We know you intend to "rationalize" services, and we know that means cuts. But your government doesn't even have the decency to let people know where the cuts are going to be. How much does your government intend to cut in the budget that's coming up in the next few days? Tell us now. At least let us know what's happening.

Hon Mr Harris: I know the member will be aware that I do not plan to announce budget details today in the Legislature. Those will be announced by the minister next Tuesday. I think you will find in the whole area of women's shelters, sexual assault education, prevention, assistance and counselling that the budget will be one that will be very well received by all those, including the member, who are interested in that issue.

I might also add in addition to all of that the other initiatives the government is taking that your government had opportunities to and refused to: a Victims' Bill of Rights identifying and protecting specific rights for victims of violent crime, the majority of whom are women; establishing automated information referral services; providing round-the-clock person-to-person referral to local victim services; maintaining full funding to 34 sexual assault centres; 24-hour crisis services.

I wish that maybe somebody else will ask me a question so I can enlist —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

HIGHWAY FINANCING

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As the minister knows, a few months ago I brought to this House a resolution asking for part of the federal gas tax to be put into the national highway system and I appreciate the minister's support in that area. I know the Canadian Automobile Association is developing a strategy to make the deterioration of Canada's highways an issue in the upcoming federal election. Minister, what is your response to the CAA's most recent effort to seek federal funding for national highway policy?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I certainly would like to thank the member for Niagara South for the question. I know this is an issue he has been very much involved with.

I am pleased that CAA is continuing to pursue federal funding for a national highway program. The federal government receives approximately \$2 billion a year from Ontario motorists in federal gasoline and related fuel taxes. Unfortunately, the people of this province do not receive any reinvestment of their tax dollars back into our provincial highway infrastructure.

This government is spending more on highway rehabilitation than the previous governments did in the past eight years. In Ontario we are addressing the need to protect our highway system. It's about time the federal government did the same. That is why I have been encouraging the federal government to provide the equivalent of at least two cents a litre from the 10 cents it collects from Ontario motorists to reinvest back into Ontario highways.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): What about the Port Colborne hospital?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Is that right?

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): What about the hospital?

Mr Hudak: I say to the members opposite, actually you had a very good discussion on health care in Port Colborne earlier today. I want to ask about the highways through my riding.

The Minister of Transportation has been very good to the riding of Niagara South: about \$12 million in funding for the QEW. I've written to the minister also for funding for Highway 3 through Gasline. It is a very important highway, I tell the members opposite. In addition to the hospital, I have a very important question on the funding for Highway 3 through Gasline. I hope the minister will have good news for us soon.

Minister, what people in Port Colborne also want to know about the highway through Gasline and the QEW is, what does the national highway policy mean for the people of Port Colborne?

Hon Mr Palladini: I've had a chance to travel some sections of the national highway system these recent months with both the member for Niagara South and the member for Middlesex. There are 5,000 kilometres of the national highway system right here in Ontario. These routes are vital to economic links. These highways are an indispensable resource to Ottawa that Ottawa cannot afford to ignore any longer.

Under the national highway program, funding for the system would be shared between federal and provincial governments. The federal government has negotiated with other provinces to provide funding for their national highways. New Brunswick, for example, has a three-year project, \$340 million in cost-sharing with the federal government. I am disappointed that the federal government has not responded to my presentation to the federal standing committee, nor to a resolution of the member for Niagara South.

I will keep trying. I also encourage their federal cousins across the road —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

1450

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Something happened in this province yesterday that I believe is without precedent. We had a coroner presiding over a coroner's inquest into the death of a 22-month-old little girl, a death caused by her mother, who beat her to death. That coroner said there was nobody in your ministry who was acting as an advocate for children. He said, "There is something missing at the top of this system...there's no driver." He then urged the jury to call on you to have someone in government who will be responsible for ensuring children's aid societies are fulfilling their duties and getting enough money to do their job.

Minister, isn't that your job? Isn't that why you're there? Isn't that what you're supposed to be doing? If you're not standing up for abused children in the province of Ontario, who is?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you very much to the honourable member for the question. I respect that the coroner feels quite strongly about this issue, but with all due respect to him, I don't think creating another bureaucratic position is really going to help solve the very real problems the coroner's inquest is flagging for us about the system, the problems in the system.

We know there are difficulties in the system. That's one of the reasons why we've been cooperating with the task force, why we've been meeting and will continue to meet with the children's aid society, and that's why we've undertaken so many of the steps we have to date to try and make sure the system does not fail children again.

Mr McGuinty: This minister misses the entire point. The point is, we wouldn't need a coroner presiding over the death of a little girl in Ontario recommending that somebody do something on behalf of children who are being abused if you were doing your job. We wouldn't have to have a special person with special authority to perform those kinds of duties if you were doing your job.

You know what you've done to date? You've stolen \$17 million from Ontario's children's aid societies. That has led to the layoff of 340 case workers in Ontario. The case workers who remain behind are overworked and they can't keep up with the workload. There are too many kids in abusive situations today throughout the province whose needs aren't being met because you're not doing your job. It's as simple as that.

Minister, \$17 million at minimum; all I'm asking of you today is to restore the \$17 million you stole from Ontario's children's aid societies.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the honourable member's concern about this issue, although I do have concerns about his attempts to turn this into a political issue. Throwing more money at a system that isn't working is not going help the workers out there who need support and it's certainly not going to help the children who need support from the system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Sudbury East, come to order. Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order, please. I don't want to debate it. Come to order. The minister has to be heard when she's answering the questions. I can't hear the minister. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. What the workers in the system are telling me, what the children's aid societies are telling me is that what we need are things like a risk assessment model, an information system, a better definition of neglect, protocols with the coroner, public education, professional education, better paediatric screening. All of those things this government is committed to, we have under way, and we look forward to working with the children's aid societies in future to improve this system.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): To the same minister, if I could have your attention for a moment, all those things you listed, you're quite right that people out in the field have said that those are necessary steps, but the list doesn't stop there. If you read the transcripts from the coroner's inquest, if you read the coroner's directions to the panel, you will see that much of the focus was also on the fact that the cutbacks you have put in place, with the increase in demand, have left CASs right now struggling to meet the caseload.

Minister, I agree with you, simply throwing money at problems doesn't solve problems, but in this case you've got, on the record, a plea from the children's aid societies that their staff cannot meet the needs that are out there, the demands that are out there, with the size of the caseload that they have and the cuts that have happened to their staffing levels.

While we are waiting for task force reports and others, you must take some initial steps. Restoring the \$17 million now, as an interim measure, would help ease the situation.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I mentioned, there are many things that need to be done to improve the system so that deaths that have shocked everyone do not continue to occur. These deaths that the coroner is looking at go back several years, and what we want to make sure is that they don't continue in the future. That's why we are working so hard with all the partners in the community to make sure we can improve the system. There are a number of things that the coroner's recommendations have said to date. We expect there will be many more. We started action last year; that action continues because we believe that the system must be improved.

Ms Lankin: Minister, if you believe the system must be improved, I accept that at face value from you. You must take two additional steps beyond what you have listed out for us here today. You cannot wait, of course, as you've alluded to yourself, for the end of all the inquests, the tragedies and the stories that we're going to continue to hear, and the whole list of recommendations. You can't simply wait for the task force report. The task force themselves say they're just scratching the surface. You must do two things.

You must immediately restore the \$17 million so we can get some more staff to deal with the problems that are there right now, and you must refer the Child and

Family Services Act to a legislative committee so that we can all work together to help you solve these problems. Will you commit to those two things today, please, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I believe that continued and further public consultation, all partisan involvement, is very much part of the steps that we want to take to look at and review the legislation, to review the system, to review the recommendations that come from the coroner. There are many things that we want to do.

There is contingency funding for children's aid societies if they need additional financial support. Many of them have accessed that. We also put out almost \$45 million two weeks ago to try and prevent children from needing children's aid society services.

I would like to remind the honourable member that some of the problems we are trying to fix in cooperation with the coroner and the child welfare agencies are problems that existed under their government. If she is so concerned about the money for the children's aid societies, perhaps they should have thought about playing Russian roulette with the estimates bill where \$135 million of children's society money was put at risk because they were playing politics with supply bills.

1500

OMAFRA/UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question today is directed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. My riding of Guelph is delighted to now be the home of OMAFRA's head office. Naturally the city is very pleased with the new relationship that's going to be developed between the ministry and the University of Guelph, and this week you formally recognized and celebrated that new partnership. The benefits to the city are obvious and, make no mistake, we're pretty excited in Guelph about the local opportunities that will be there for us and for the university. My question for the minister is: I'm wondering how this new partnership is going to affect agriculture and is going to affect agribusiness all across Ontario.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I wish to thank my honourable colleague from Guelph for that question. It's a very important one. The University of Guelph and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs have been working together for well over 100 years. The partnership has stood the test of time and now it is being formalized.

The students at our regional agricultural colleges of Kemptville, Alfred and Ridgeway will benefit from better access to the University of Guelph. The core courses will be common across the province to prevent duplication and the agrifood business will also benefit because they will have better access to the university research findings. Finally, the enhanced partnership will mean a more knowledgeable, more self-reliant and more competitive agricultural industry at the best university in North America: the University of Guelph in the city of Guelph.

Mrs Elliott: I'm interested in the students you mention from the agricultural colleges. This is a big change for some of the colleges as well as a big change for the

university. Now that the colleges are affiliated with the University of Guelph, I'm wondering what kind of changes they are going to undertake and whether the ministry is seeing any effects on those colleges from the participation they've had with the university so far.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Thank you for the supplementary. Yes, there are some extremely positive aspects that are occurring at the satellite campuses. Alfred, Ridgetown and Kemptville have had increases in enrolment of 13%, 18% and 21% respectively. The applications at the University of Guelph are up by 30%. I believe that tells you the message of what's happening in agriculture and in rural Ontario. There's a very positive attitude there, and this government is very supportive of that industry.

We were faced with tough budgetary questions. We amalgamated to prevent the duplication, as opposed to the previous government shutting down two of our agricultural colleges. We are supporting them and we support that industry without any question.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): My question is to the Minister of Health. Over the last couple of years we've been dealing with the issue of closure of psychiatric hospitals, specifically the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital. Recently we made a number of submissions and other people made a number of submissions to the Health Services Restructuring Commission. One of the submissions was made by the Ministry of Health, and I found it interesting that the Ministry of Health would suggest that the forensic patients in the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital should be submitted to the St Thomas Elgin General Hospital. Minister, do you think that's a good idea?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I obviously support the ministry's response to the Health Services Restructuring Commission's London restructuring report.

A couple of things: With respect to bed numbers on the psychiatric side in our health care system, we've made it very clear that the government policy is that beds are not to be cut, contrary to the time when the NDP and Liberals were in office, without the community services being in place, and we expect the commission to follow those guidelines.

With respect to forensic services, which are currently located on the St Thomas site, the commission is recommending that a cluster of forensic beds be retained in St Thomas. Our comment, as a government, through the deputy minister, was that we don't need to set up another board of governance in that area. I welcome any suggestions, but I'm not setting up more bureaucracy. We need all the money for patient care, both in your area and across the province, so our suggestion was that perhaps the local hospital board, the acute care hospital, could also become the board of governance for the psychiatric beds that are to be rebuilt in St Thomas.

Mr North: In other words, you're not suggesting necessarily that beds have to go in the hospital, that perhaps they could come under the same governance.

We're quite concerned. It has become more apparent that perhaps the commission doesn't really have the

authority to close psychiatric hospitals throughout the province. In fact, the authority for closing psychiatric hospitals throughout the province is actually with you, as minister. The people of Elgin county and I know the people of London-Middlesex and perhaps the people who live in Leeds-Brockville and areas like that would want to know, Minister: Is it your plan to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital?

Hon Mr Wilson: No, but the honourable member will know that it's quite immoral to keep going the way we're going on that site. Only 38% of that building has been used over the last few years. Most of the site is vacant, money is tied up in administration and overhead costs are in excess of anything that's acceptable across this country. Frankly, every dollar is needed for psychiatric patient services.

With respect to the government's suggestion on governance for the new psychiatric beds that are to be rebuilt in St Thomas, we have said siting could perhaps be appropriate on the acute care site because then you don't have to build another kitchen and you don't have to build another set of administrative offices and you don't have to build all kinds of things, if you could have an agreement to share the site that's there at the acute.

I want to quote Betty Couture, who's the executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association's Elgin branch. She says she likes the transfer of the remaining psychiatric hospital beds to general hospitals because it removes the stigma of people needing psychiatric treatment. So there are a lot of benefits and I'd ask the honourable member to keep an open mind with respect to the proposal.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. On February 22 last year, with much fanfare you announced MRI services for Sudbury. You announced that the site would be the Sudbury General Hospital, so on March 11 last year the General hospital wrote General Electric of Canada a cheque for \$449,951 for the machine. In September the commission came to Sudbury, closed two hospitals, including the General, slashed beds, removed valuable hospital funding and killed countless health care jobs.

Last Friday I attended a press conference. Because of the community's dire need for MRI services, the Laurentian Hospital announced it will install and provide the services on the Laurentian site. Minister, we have two sites. My question is simple: Where should General Electric deliver the machine?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member knows very well that the discussions are continuing to take place in this community with respect to the siting. The directives from the Health Services Restructuring Commission make it clear that we have to make sure the MRI is sited at the proper place. We've made that clear all the way along. Frankly, you wouldn't have MRI services if it weren't for restructuring, because you're saving money, and every dollar more is going back into new services like an MRI for Sudbury, which

the previous government didn't put in place, which your government didn't put in place but we're proud to put in place.

Mr Bartolucci: Let me quote from your press release. You said this on February 22: "I am delighted that MRI services will now be accessible to the people of Sudbury. Patients in need of health care should not be forced to shoulder the burden of travelling long, often hazardous distances to receive these services."

We have no MRI. Your commission member, George Lund, said, "The commission does not have the jurisdiction to say either yes or no to the Laurentian proposal. Only the Ministry of Health and the minister have." Minister, stop playing politics; stop waffling. Tell the people of Sudbury and northeastern Ontario: Will you approve the MRI siting at Laurentian?

Hon Mr Wilson: The moment that the local community tells us where it wants the MRI — we've already booked the money in the Treasurer's budget of last year, contrary to promises you people made. It's all ready to go. The moment you guys decide locally where it's to go, you can put it in. I don't have much more to say about this.

The local community, based on the Health Services Restructuring Commission's directives, has to figure out exactly what site is appropriate because it's a very expensive endeavour, building a radioactive bunker for an MRI machine, if someone comes along a few months later and says, "You put it in the wrong spot." You figure out with your community where it should go and get the thing up and running.

1510

ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the minister of industry, trade and technology. I have in my hand a copy of the annual report of the Ontario Lottery Corp. In this report —

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Never mind. Have the guts to take a stand. Your commission doesn't have the guts to take a stand and you don't: Chicken and Chicken Little.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I announced in February —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister of Health and the member for Sudbury, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Durham East, there's no reason for you to get into this fight. Order, member for Durham East.

Mr Martin: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I have in my hands the annual report of the lottery corporation. Let me just read to you some of the highlights.

"Annual sales surpassed \$2 billion for the first time in the corporation's 21-year history.... Cash payments to the province of Ontario during 1995-96 fiscal were \$674.6 million, which exceeded 1994-95 by \$73 million.... The new \$3 instant product, Instant Keno, returned sales of \$112.6 million, which was 50.1% over budget.... OLC's new online system project was completed, providing

increased capacity and improved delivery times for new products."

Minister, with this record and the lottery corporation's record of increased productivity over its years of life, why are you seriously considering the privatization of any part, if not all of this, considering the impact this will have on my community, on northern Ontario and on this province?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the member for Sault Ste Marie, I've been out of the country doing some trade mission work for the province and I didn't realize that the name of my ministry had changed. It is the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, not industry, trade and technology or some other fabrication of the member for Sault Ste Marie.

I'm glad the member has been reading the annual report. It makes very good reading. It is very helpful for this province to have the revenue from the Ontario Lottery Corp. Lord knows it needs it, after what the people over there had been doing over the past five years. I would also like to point out to the member that it creates a lot of jobs; it has 11,000 retailers selling its products across Ontario; it employs 789 staff, many up in his riding of Sault Ste Marie and some in Toronto; and it has done exactly what we thought it would do: It has contributed a large amount of money, in the neighbourhood of \$700 million.

Mr Martin: If the minister is so convinced that what the lottery corporation is doing now is working so well for the province, the question continues to be the same. But I would like to ask him if GTECH means anything to him, a corporation out of the United States that runs most of the lottery operations in that country and indeed around the world, a corporation whose reputation is at best questionable, which has been before the courts for its methods of operation. It already owns the software the lottery corporation in Sault Ste Marie uses to run its games.

Are you willing, Minister, in your attempt to privatize everything that moves in this province, to set up the reputation for integrity of the lottery corporation so that you can turn this over to your friends and the corporate sector? What guarantees can you give us here today that the integrity of the lottery corporation will be kept intact when in fact you turn it over to operations like GTECH?

Hon Mr Saunderson: The member for Sault Ste Marie knows full well what this government is doing. It is trying to make sure we do the best possible job in all of our agencies, boards and commissions. We are determined to bring fiscal responsibility to the government, and with all our agencies, boards and commissions, we are applying the same principle. We already have found, over the years, last year, that this agency, the Ontario Lottery Corp, was able to find savings of \$37 million, and we're going to continue to do that so that the taxpayers of Ontario are better served.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Last

week, Minister, I had an opportunity to ask you a question about Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act, and the answer that you gave seems to have caused some concern for the member for Port Arthur, who continues to go around saying that that act will have a negative impact on small and northern communities.

Minister, could you reiterate your answer and tell us what impact the act will have or whether or not in fact the member for Port Arthur is engaging in the customary Liberal fearmongering?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Thank you to the honourable member for Chatham-Kent for his question. First, I think I should say that our friends on the opposite benches seem to want it both ways, but I don't believe they can have it both ways. In this House they told us during discussions on Bill 103 to trust municipalities; only they knew what was in the best interests of their citizens. Now, as we turn full funding over to municipalities who fund the lion's share of libraries, they don't trust those same municipalities. I guess the question that has to be asked is, what position do they want to take? You either trust municipalities or you don't.

Mr Carroll: The member for Port Arthur, in his attack last week, talked specifically about Geraldton, Atikokan and Ignace and the impact Bill 109 would have on those three particular small northern communities. Could you comment for us specifically on what you believe the impact will be for those three communities?

Hon Ms Mushinski: In each of the three communities the provincial grant is about 6% of total library revenues. This is even before we've undertaken to fully implement the Who Does What initiatives. During the hearings a number of communities actually applauded the legislation for its flexibility in the areas of fees and revenue generation.

The member for Port Arthur says that this is insufficient, even though he admitted during the hearings that these fees can generate 6% of total revenue through revenue generation. I should remind him and the opposite benches that that's the exact total of our funding level for Ignace, Atikokan and Geraldton.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Can you give any answer without reading it, Marilyn? You have got time to practise.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just quickly on that point, and I let the question and the answer go. I just want to caution the members when asking a question. If they want to review the question asked by the member from Chatham, although I don't particularly think it's out of order, it may be intemperate to offer that kind of question, the original one, and I would caution the members opposite.

1520

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Premier. Here today in the gallery are people from Port Colborne. They are wondering about their hospital. Every community is wondering, how does the hospital restructuring commission operate? Does it operate at

arm's length from cabinet, or does cabinet have the right to interfere any time it wants in any way it wants?

Last week, Premier, we had two of your ministers offering contradictory answers. We had the Minister of Municipal Affairs saying, "I've written to the commission and they've done what I said, they've changed the dates." The Minister of Health says that's fine, that everybody including the cabinet can talk to this commission. Then we've got the minister responsible for francophone affairs saying it's inappropriate at all times for him to interfere because he's a minister and he understands he should not be talking directly with commissions.

Premier, this is important for you to clarify, for the sake of your government, for this commission and other government commissions, what will you do in this instance?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'll refer this to the Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member Mr Hudak brought in the delegation from Port Colborne today and we had an opportunity to discuss the government's vision for health care. I think they're very interested in the fact that for the first time in Ontario we're going to have a rural health care policy.

I would remind the honourable members from the opposition parties that you launched 60 district health council studies out there using a dataset for beds that was made in Toronto for urban areas. As a result, those district health councils, without any say from our government, brought in about 60 studies that were launched by two previous governments. What we found, lo and behold, in those small rural areas, using those urban benchmarks, using those made in Toronto that were made for areas with lots of hospitals, was that they didn't apply to the one-hospital towns like Port Colborne.

What the people of Port Colborne want is guaranteed access to 24-hour care, they want a rural health care policy that responds to their needs —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I want to note for the record that the Premier refuses to answer on why he doesn't have conflict-of-interest guidelines for his ministers. He has none, and the last two Premiers did.

The Office of the Integrity Commissioner has said that parliamentary convention prohibits ministers from talking to commissions, and despite what the Minister of Health tried to tell us the other day, it says ministers always wear the cloak of ministerial responsibility. You can't pretend to be an MPP one minute and a minister the next.

Now we have a clear-cut case of interference taking place, and we want to know from you, Premier — or, Minister, if the Premier won't answer — what other ministers have communicated with the commission, what correspondence has taken place, and what have you done, Minister, on behalf of Alliston or other hospitals, directly with the commission, what has the cabinet of this province done interfering with this commission? We want those answers today.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member should be ashamed that he's a member of a party where his federal cousins cut health care \$2 billion, and that they launched

district health council studies that are now resulting in fear throughout rural Ontario, without any proper policy in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: You keep going and I'll keep getting up. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: The fact of the matter is that the Ontario Hospital Association — and I want to quote — is giving this government credit for our actions. I've already answered the fact many times that we are at arm's length from the commission, but it doesn't prohibit government from making policies. On April 23, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association wrote to me as Minister of Health. David MacKinnon said:

"I would like to express the Ontario Hospital Association's appreciation for your recognition of the fact that there is a need to take a different approach to restructuring small hospitals in rural and remote areas. We are strongly supportive of your alternative strategy to continue the commission's restructuring efforts for urban areas and develop a separate rural health policy to ensure that people living in smaller communities can continue to have access to high-quality hospital services."

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Let me tell you something: The hospitals in Niagara, including Port Colborne, don't belong —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): That is not a question when he starts with "Let me tell you."

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Agriculture. "Let me tell you something" isn't out of order. It's not out of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Durham East, I once again thank you for your helpful advice, but it's out of order as well.

Mr Kormos: The hospitals of Niagara, including that of Port Colborne, are not yours to shut down. People from Port Colborne, like Joe Olsiak and thousands of others, built that hospital brick by brick, donation by donation, volunteer-hour by volunteer-hour. Thousands of people across Niagara have stood firmly, shoulder to shoulder, saying no to hospital shutdowns.

Why do you and this government ignore the people of Niagara and prefer your bean counters and your interest in a tax break for the very wealthy instead of the quality health care system that those folks have built over generations and want to maintain?

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member is part of the government that launched the almost 60 district health council studies at \$26 million. Those studies are coming in, including Port Colborne's, and the honourable member did it without a rural health care policy in place. We're putting one in place, in consultation with experts.

The expert panel is Robert Muir, the Ontario Hospital Association; Dr Ray Dawes, president of the rural physicians' group of the Ontario Medical Association; Dr

Michael Murray, head of emergency services, Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie; Dr Jim Rourke, family physician from Goderich; Willis Rudy, former executive director, Wilson Memorial Hospital in Marathon; Charlotte Clay-Ireland, past chairperson of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association; J.P. Hube, district health council representative from Cochrane DHC and past chair of the Timmins District Health Council; Louise LeBlanc, president of the Emergency Nurses Association of Ontario; and Susan Shaw, who is an emergency room staff nurse at North Hastings District Hospital.

The experts for the first time in many decades in Ontario are being asked to develop a rural health care policy, and it will be good news for rural Ontario and something long overdue.

Mr Kormos: Good news? Not for Niagara. Not for Hotel Dieu. Not for Port Colborne.

The Speaker: I know full well the member for Welland-Thorold wants to stay, because I know he has House duty.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): How did you know that?

The Speaker: I know everybody who has House duty.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTIONS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): My House duty, Mr Speaker, is to move that the following substitutions be made to the membership of the following standing committees:

On the standing committee on the Ombudsman: Mr Crozier for Mr Patten; on the standing committee on social development: Mr Patten for Ms Caplan.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Johnson moves the following substitutions be made to the membership of the following standing committees.

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: I hear it. Dispensed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): J'ai ici une pétition pour la préservation de l'hôpital Montfort. Je peux vous dire que nous avons maintenant 128 000 signatures:

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est :

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital

Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance de toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord de l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé — »

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Un instant. When I can't hear the member who has the floor speaking, there's something wrong. There's too much noise. Monsieur le député.

M. Lalonde : Je vais recommencer ce paragraphe:

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme complète de services en français, mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition which reads:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas sexual assault is a crime and the effects of abuse last a lifetime for the survivors of these crimes;

"Whereas sexual assault crisis centres provide community-based, women-positive, cost-effective services which recognize and respond to both recent, historical and childhood sexual assault, offering short-term crisis intervention, longer-term therapy, public education, prevention, court and police support;

"Whereas hospital-based treatment centres are mandated primarily to work with survivors of recent sexual assault with a medical forensic approach, offering only short-term counselling and referrals, while adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse or historical assault need longer-term services to recover from the horrendous crimes they have suffered;

"Whereas if Parliament decides to close sexual assault crisis centres and redistribute drastically reduced funds to treatment centres, most adult survivors of sexual assault will not have the services they need to heal and will be further victimized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to maintain community-based sexual assault crisis centres."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1530

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): These petitions concern gun control:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy other than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

PORT COLBORNE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that I know the people in the gallery will be interested in. It's to the government of Ontario about the Port Colborne Hospital.

"Whereas Mike Harris told the people of Ontario during the 1995 provincial election campaign, 'Certainly, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals;'

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has proceeded to cut over one billion much-needed dollars from community hospitals; and

"Whereas the people of Port Colborne have come to rely upon the caring professional service provided by health care givers at the Port Colborne hospital and view this betrayal by the Mike Harris government as an attack on quality health care services in the Niagara region; and

"Whereas the residents of Port Colborne do not accept the notion that their hospital should be closed, because it's essential in order to maintain a caring and humane community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government keep their election promise and restore health care spending to the level at which they promised during the last election campaign so the Port Colborne hospital will be able to continue to provide its much-needed valuable services."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

NON-INSTRUCTION SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition that has been signed by 905 residents of the regional municipality of Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, into the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; and

"Whereas Bill 104 seriously undermines the job security of caring, professional support staff of the educational systems of Sudbury district and Manitoulin regions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the process of 'outsourcing' or the 'privatization' of essential support staff, namely custodians, maintenance, office, clerical, technical, secretarial and educational assistant staff. They are an essential service to the Sudbury and Manitoulin separate and public school boards and to the students of our region."

I agree with the petitioners. I would like to thank David Chezzi, who is a CUPE member, for putting this together, and I am pleased to present it today.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is a threat to our education system;

"Whereas the Education Improvement Commission has far-reaching and unprecedented powers;

"Whereas outsourcing non-instructional jobs such as school administrative secretaries, custodians, library technicians and educational assistants will result in chaos and poor service and limited savings, if any;

"We, the residents of Ontario, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 104, to limit the powers of the Education Improvement Commission and to guarantee successor rights for non-instructional jobs.

"We support our local secretarial and clerical staff of the Oxford County Board of Education, members of CUPE Local 3581."

PORT COLBORNE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): "To the Minister of Health for Ontario and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the fully accredited Port Colborne General Hospital is a facility originally built with the personal donations of the good citizens of Port Colborne for the citizens of Port Colborne, and these same citizens continue to donate towards the purchase of special equipment for their hospital; and

"Whereas the emergency ward of this hospital treated 17,942 cases in the past year, and the absorption of this caseload by a neighbouring municipality's facility is sure to lead to delays in treatment; and

"Whereas the facility sits on land adjacent to a major marina, three city blocks from the shipping industry on the Welland Canal and a few kilometres from Sherkston Shores resort, which has approximately 200,000 visitors a year, all being facilities which rely on Port Colborne General Hospital, along with other commercial and industrial facilities in Port Colborne; and

"Whereas Port Colborne has a significantly higher percentage of senior citizens, relative to the provincial average, with no access to public transportation, resulting in severe hardship upon having loved ones placed in an out-of-town facility; and

"Whereas the loss of the only hospital in a municipality will lead to severe economic loss to the city through

the decline in residential and commercial development; and

"Whereas the cuts to health care in Ontario have already reduced the funding of the Niagara region to below provincial averages;

"The residents of Port Colborne do hereby petition the Minister of Health and the government of Ontario, notwithstanding any recommendations by the local district health council, to ensure the continued existence of Port Colborne General Hospital as it operates at this time."

I'm happy to affix my signature to this petition, which I understand, in various forms, will be presented with 12,000 different signatures.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is attacking workers' compensation benefits and the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas Tory plans include taking \$15 billion from injured workers and giving \$6 billion to employers, including the government's rich corporate friends;

"Whereas Cam Jackson, the former minister without portfolio with responsibility for gutting the WCB, refused to hold public hearings, choosing to meet secretly with business and insurance industry representatives;

"Whereas the WCB has about \$7.6 billion in assets and its unfunded liability has been steadily shrinking;

"Whereas the Jackson report and WCB legislation are just part of a coordinated attack on occupational health and safety protections for working families in Ontario;

"Whereas Tory plans also include abolition of the internationally respected Occupational Disease Panel;

"Whereas the government needs to hear the message that taking money from injured workers and lowering incentives for employers to make workplaces safer is not the way to make Ontario a better place to live;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold full, province-wide public hearings on WCB reform; to listen to the voice of the people calling for improved occupational health and safety protection; and to tell the Tory government to call off its attack on the dignity and standard of living of injured workers and their families."

I've affixed my signature to this wonderful petition.

1540

PORT COLBORNE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm very proud to welcome the people of Port Colborne here to the gallery and I'm very proud to commend the work of Larry Olm and his committee in bringing this petition to my attention and to the House: 10,005 signatures. Mr Kennedy, 10,006. I'd say to him, if he wants to move to Port Colborne, it's a great place to live, a lot better than York South. so we'd welcome him to Niagara South.

The petition reads:

To the Minister of Health of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the fully accredited Port Colborne General Hospital is a facility originally built with the personal donations of the good citizens of Port Colborne for the citizens of Port Colborne, and these same citizens continue to donate towards the purchase of specialty equipment for their local hospital; and

"Whereas the emergency ward of this system treated 17,942 cases in the past year and the absorption of this caseload by a neighbouring municipality's facility is sure to lead to delays in treatment; and

"Whereas the facility sits on land adjacent to a major marina, three city blocks from the shipping industry on the Welland canal and a few kilometres from Sherkston Shores resort, which has approximately 200,000 visitors a year, all being facilities which rely on Port Colborne General Hospital, along with all other commercial and industrial facilities in Port Colborne; and

"Whereas Port Colborne has a significantly higher percentage of senior citizens, relative to the provincial average, with no access to public transportation, resulting in severe hardship upon having loved ones placed in an out-of-town facility; and

"Whereas the loss of the only hospital in the municipality will lead to a severe economic loss for the city, through the decline in residential and commercial development; and

"Whereas the cuts to health care in Ontario have already reduced the funding levels of the Niagara region to below provincial averages:

"The residents who rely on the facilities of the Port Colborne General Hospital do hereby petition the Minister of Health and the government of Ontario notwithstanding any recommendations by the local district health council to ensure the continued existence of the Port Colborne General Hospital as it operates at this time."

Excellent work by Mr Olm and his crew; they should be saluted for bringing it here today.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It states:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, into the Legislative Assembly of Ontario; and

"Whereas Bill 104 seriously undermines the job security of caring professional support staff of the educational systems of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington counties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the process of outsourcing or the privatization of essential services to the Frontenac County Board of Education, the Lennox and Addington board of education, and the Frontenac, Lennox and Addington separate school board and to the students of our region."

I am very proud to have signed this, and I yield the balance of my time to the member for Windsor-Sandwich for her petition at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): No, it doesn't work that way.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 98, An Act to promote job creation and increased municipal accountability while providing for the recovery of development costs related to new growth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 98 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UNIFORM FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR L'HARMONISATION DES LIGNES DIRECTRICES FÉDÉRALES ET PROVINCIALES SUR LES ALIMENTS POUR LES ENFANTS

Mrs Ecker, on behalf of Mr Harnick, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Family Law Act to provide for child support guidelines and to promote uniformity between orders for the support of children under the Divorce Act (Canada) and orders for the support of children under the Family Law Act / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le droit de la famille pour prévoir des lignes directrices sur les aliments pour les enfants et pour promouvoir l'harmonisation entre les ordonnances alimentaires au profit des enfants rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le divorce (Canada) et celles rendues en vertu de la Loi sur le droit de la famille.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): The purpose of this bill is to bring Ontario's law into line with the federal child support guidelines so that all children in the province will be treated in a consistent way. At the same time, we are ready to implement and help Ontario's families learn about the new federal child support guidelines.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKERS' COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA LOI SUR LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 99, Loi assurant la stabilité financière du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs blessés, favorisant la prévention des lésions et des maladies dans les lieux de travail en Ontario et révisant la Loi sur les accidents du travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe Mr Ramsay had the floor. He's not here, therefore we'll go to the third party.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Bill 99 fills over 100 pages of changes to the Workers' Compensation Act. In fact, it's not changes to the act, it's a complete rewriting of the Workers' Compensation Act.

As an aside, the act is also being renamed the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. It's like the way this government employs Orwellian doublespeak. The destruction of local governance of education is called the education improvement act, the lowering of employment standards is called the Employment Standards Improvement Act, and this is now the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. You'll notice there's no longer any reference to workers in the title of the bill. There's no longer any reference to compensation. The system of compensation as we have known it in this system is certainly under attack by our current government and by the bill they've brought forward, Bill 99.

Just a moment of history: The current compensation scheme came about as a result of a historic tradeoff more than 80 years ago. I believe the legislation was passed in this Ontario Legislature to create the Workmen's Compensation Act back in April 1914. The date was April 28. I know that date because workers, injured workers, trade unionists and others across this province celebrate and come together on April 28 to remember workers and the contribution of workers, and we mourn, when we come together, the death of workers and the injury of workers in the workplace.

More than 80 years ago a historic tradeoff was made. It used to be that if a worker was injured on the work site, or had an accident during the course of duties of work, or contracted a disease that was related to occupational circumstances — for example, many people will have heard over the years of the problems that miners have had with black coal lung, it's called, the dust they breathe in and what that has meant to their respiratory system. Many miners have died of that. That's an example of an occupational disease. You can have an

occupational disease, you can have an injury, you can have an accident in the workplace.

Historically what used to happen was that the worker would have the right to sue the employer. They would have a claim, a right of action that they could take into the courts, and they could sue for the circumstances that led perhaps to the accident. They could sue for damages as a result of the injury they sustained. They could sue for loss of income. They could sue for loss of future income in order to protect their families, to provide for their families.

A little over 80 years ago a historic tradeoff was made: Workers gave up that right to sue, because for many employers that was a very unsure world. They wouldn't know from one year to the next what they might face in the way of liabilities. But as a tradeoff for workers giving up the right to sue, no longer having access to the courts to sue employers under these circumstances, employers set up and committed to contribute to a fund that would provide a pool of resources out of which compensation would be provided to workers who found themselves injured on the job through an accident or having contracted an occupational disease and not being able to work.

That tradeoff, in a sense, created a different balance, a new balance in the province, in the world of compensating workers for workplace injuries. That balance, although over the years it has had fine-tuning, although over the years there has been a much more sophisticated regime put in place to assess, first of all, whether an accident happened or not, or an injury, the nature of the injury, the nature of the disability resulting from that, the level of compensation that should be awarded in that circumstance, and with a very appropriate and growing focus on vocational rehabilitation to help injured workers return to work, to help them rehabilitate, be able to learn new skills if that is necessary or go through the physical rehabilitation to be able to return to work — much more of a focus on that, quite appropriately so — and even more appropriate, a growing focus on injury prevention, a focus on safety in the workplace.

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So the system has evolved, but the very premise on which the workers' compensation system was enacted in this province, that tradeoff between workers and employers, workers giving up the right to sue and employers contributing to the pool of money that would provide for compensation in these circumstances, that balance has remained undisturbed for over 80 years — until Bill 99 has come forward.

We touch briefly on some of the changes that are contained within Bill 99. First and foremost, Bill 99 seeks to address what the government is calling a crisis in terms of the unfunded liability by cutting benefits to injured workers. I have a real problem, first of all, with the premise that the unfunded liability is in a crisis state. Many people, when they hear the government talk about this — I think it's natural and I think the government actually plays on this in the words they use — relate it to the government's fiscal situation in terms of debt and deficit. But in the case of the Workers' Compensation Board, this is an insurance system. What we're talking about is not a debt. The Workers' Compensation Board

is not in debt to anyone currently. In fact, they've got hundreds of millions of dollars of assets in their building, in investment, assets that are earning money. What the government's talking about is a projected gap in the future from what the revenues of the Workers' Compensation Board will be, let's say, in 10 years and what actuaries think their liabilities will be in 10 years.

What they do is they say, "Okay, if we continue to have occurrences of workplace injuries with the resulting disabilities at the same rate that we have been having them and this is how much we think we have to pay out every year in new claims, in 10 years' time we'll have this amount that we'll need to pay out and the board's revenues will be this amount." The actuaries have projected, and a few years ago their projections were quite serious, that there would be a gap between those two. That's referred to as the unfunded liability.

There is no doubt that steps need to be taken to address that concern. The first and foremost and most significant step to be taken is the focus on prevention of injury in the first place, to stop the growth of the unfunded liability, stop the growth of the board's liability by stopping accidents and injuries in the workplace to the best of our ability. We should all be dedicating ourselves to that as our primary goal.

Of course, the second way to address the unfunded liability is to look at the level of revenues that are coming in and to ascertain whether or not that is appropriate. You could, quite frankly, look at increasing the revenues by increasing the — I'm not sure what the member has just handed me here, but —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): That's for later.

Ms Lankin: For later, okay. It didn't seem to apply to what I was talking about and I thought, "Am I speaking to the wrong bill?" Thank you.

The second way would be to increase the pool of revenues that are coming in to the board. The revenues that are provided to the board come from premiums that employers pay, and here I think it's really important that we take a look at employers not as one large group, because there's a very different experience in different types of industries. Some industries, as you can imagine, have a much higher risk of workplace accidents and injuries and they're rated at a higher level, because this is an insurance system. It's just like, for example, if you are a driver who is prone to having a lot of accidents, you pay a higher rate of insurance. There's a risk rating, an incident rating that goes on, but employers are also treated as classes of employers, groups of industries where there is some common relationship in terms of the workplace experience with accidents and with injuries.

Some employers, I think it's quite true, find themselves working very hard to reduce workplace accidents and yet over the years have still seen their premiums go up. I think they felt, and probably quite rightly, a sense of injustice around that. But I have to tell you that there are many other employers, employers who had extraordinary levels of accidents and injuries, who didn't take those preventive steps who in fact should be paying significantly more in premiums than they are now.

To simply ignore the premium side of it and say we're not going to look at that, in fact to go further — I think

the thing that is so insane about how the government has approached this, but it really belies the true motives of the government, is that they not only have not looked at increasing revenues in any particular class or area of employer, they've gone a step further. They have reduced employers' premiums to the tune of \$6 billion before this legislation has even passed. Before the reforms of the Workers' Compensation Board and the restructuring itself is through, they took a decision to simply slash employers' benefits by 5%, which hands \$6 billion back into employers' profits.

I guess if you weren't worried about the unfunded liability you could understand taking some steps. Maybe we would see it would be more appropriate to raise workers' benefits, or maybe raise workers' benefits a bit and lower employers' premiums a bit. But to hand off \$6 billion in premiums when you say you've got an unfunded liability and you purport it to be a crisis — although I disagree with that representation. I think it's under control. I think we can see that it has been coming down over the last few years. There's a way to go, I will agree with people on that, but it makes no sense to me, it's sort of like giving a tax cut when you've got to go and borrow it and the bond rating agencies are still hovering over your shoulder. There's a bit of an analogy here. The other analogy is in terms of who the money primarily benefits within our society.

Anyway, I guess in order to keep their eye on that unfunded liability target that the government has set and having given away \$6 billion, they find themselves in more of a predicament. So the first place they go is to the well of workers' benefits by cutting the benefits to injured workers.

I'd like to understand what's behind the philosophy of that. The government doesn't say it, but the only thing I can think is that there must be a mindset in the government benches that people who are collecting workers' compensation are somehow malingerers. Therefore you've got to cut those benefits, you've got to be tough with those people and you've got to force them back into the workplace, and the way to do it is to starve them. I can't think of any other rationale for cutting workers' benefits, taking it down to 85% of net average earnings. The current is at 90%, and the difference, by the way, is that when you're on workers' compensation you don't pay certain payments like unemployment insurance and things like that. So that's why it's 90%. Why would you cut it down to 85%?

I don't understand why a worker who has been injured in the workplace and is unable to work shouldn't be made whole in terms of their salary, particularly during the acute period of the disability and while they're seeking treatment and perhaps trying to get back into the workplace. I don't understand this at all. To take benefits down to 85% is an economic penalty.

If you're hurt in the workplace through no fault of your own — something happens, it's an accident, accidents do happen, as they say — why should there be an economic penalty that you face? Yet that's what this government is bringing in. The only answer is a disdain for people who are injured in the workplace and who are collecting compensation, some sense that they must be

malingeringers — and, quite frankly, to pay for the \$6 billion handoff to the employers with the 5% cut in benefits. There is an incredible distortion to that historical balance with the steps that the government is taking here.

Some of the other things that are contained in the bill: They're going to be reducing the cost-of-living protection for almost all injured workers. If at the end of the treatment and the attempts at physical rehabilitation and vocational rehabilitation you're unable to return to work, or perhaps you've returned to work but you have an ongoing disability, in the system there is a payment for that. That's a disability pension. The amount can vary, determined by the degree of severity of the disability.

Those pensions have an indexing formula. For most workers it's currently at 75%. That's a change that our government made, which the government currently points to a number of times and says, "Why are you critical of what we're doing, when you made changes and you brought in" — it's called the Friedland formula, the indexation formula — "and you brought it down to 75%?"

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When we did that, I would point out to them, first of all, we did it to reinvest that money in protecting some of the most vulnerable of workers, those who are referred to as the older injured worker, who were injured before a certain time when legislation changed and benefits changed, who were literally being starved, who were living on a pension that was so low and didn't have the protection, and this provided most of those workers with another \$200 a month, literally lifting many of them out of poverty.

I would also point out that the Friedland formula was arrived at through an extensive set of discussions and negotiations — and I know, because I was at the table for many of them — between employer representatives and injured worker and union representatives. It wasn't easy for anyone around that table, but we worked it through and we came to a consensus. That was endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Workers have been cut completely out of the discussions that have been going on with respect to the changes that we see here in Bill 99. This government has only consulted the employer community. You know, this insurance system isn't a protection just for employers, that old trade-off, the protection against the workers who would otherwise have had a right of action, a right to sue; it's also protection for workers who are injured on the job for their basic incomes, to support families out there in our communities. It seems like the government has forgotten that, because workers have not been part of the consultation for this.

If you raise the Friedland formula as some sort of criticism, then I fail to understand why you're taking the cost-of-living protection down to 50%. You're further reducing it. By the way, for the older injured workers, for whom we took that money and reinvested it and brought them up out of poverty, we also provided — because their pensions are very small; they come from before changes in benefits and legislation — 100% inflation protection on those pensions. You're taking that away.

Those are the older workers who are beyond the age of returning to the workplace, who are living on a pittance,

who were literally in poverty, who have been lifted just barely above the poverty line. Now you're going to allow those pensions to be whittled away by inflation. I'm glad there's not high inflation right now, but when it returns, those workers and their families are going to be significantly at risk. I hope that's something that through the course of this bill the government will look at again.

A couple of interesting things I've found, changes in the bill where you're looking to take away the right to compensation for occupational chronic stress and to cut off compensation for chronic pain after "the usual healing time." I don't know what that means, and I'll tell you, the medical experts don't know what that means. You're going to end up having an administrative decision, I think, trying to judge what "the usual healing time" means.

I find this interesting because this area of compensation precedents — compensation law, I guess — really evolved once there was an independent appeals tribunal that was established. For many years the system policed itself. Inside the compensation board, if someone who was first looking at the claim rejected it, it would go to an adjudicator internally and then there was another appeal level internally. But it was all inside the board; they were all board employees examining decisions of other board employees.

There was a great deal of feeling in the province that this was really inappropriate and that you did need to have an independent, outside review, and as a result there were changes to the compensation act back in the mid-1980s that created the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal as an independent tripartite appeals tribunal — tripartite meaning you have an independent chair on the panel, someone who doesn't come from a named constituency of interests with respect to the workers' compensation system, and then you have two other people on the panel, one who comes from the employers' community and one who comes from the workers' community.

I know a little bit about the tribunal because I was honoured to have been appointed as a member of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal and I served there for a couple of years full-time in the capacity as a representative from the workers' community on this tripartite appeals body. I would have been one of the three people on a panel who would hear appeals brought forward either by employers or by workers of decisions of the Workers' Compensation Board.

With the new independent appeals tribunal began a day of development of new case law with respect to compensation. The whole area of chronic pain and chronic stress and repetitive stress injuries were areas that were being talked about, but the board policy was very restrictive. In fact, essentially what board policy said was, "We're not going to compensate for those things," and never did any of the work to look at, were there real injuries here, was there a substantial case that could be made, a legitimate case that could be made?

Some of the first and most significant cases that came before the new Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal — which is commonly referred to as WCAT; that's the short name for the appeals tribunal — were cases of this nature. I didn't sit on the particular panel, but the

overall chair of the tribunal, Ron Ellis, chaired a panel which dealt with a ground-breaking case dealing with chronic pain, understanding the roots of it, understanding what in the workplace can trigger the onset of chronic pain. There's much that we don't know, and I think it's really unfortunate when I see certain members of the Conservative caucus who just dismiss these things. The only thing I can assume is that in their minds they think that someone who presents with this kind of condition or is diagnosed with this condition is malingering.

That's not the case. If you look at the medical evidence, you will find that there is a growing understanding of some of these conditions which for many years we didn't really understand. It's like environmental sensitivities. I sat on a panel on an appeal of a case, with a woman who had come forward. I'll tell you, her life was absolutely shattered by the medical conditions she was suffering. With all the research work that was done and all the delving into her background and history, it turned out that she was exposed to a certain combination of substances in the workplace which triggered something in her immune system and the balance of the systems in the body. I don't understand all the medical nature behind this, but it triggered something which set off a chain reaction within her body.

I'll tell you, within a matter of months she was a shell of her former self. She had barely the strength and capacity to stand, she had lost incredible muscle tone, she had respiratory problems, she had skin problems, she was having chronic severe headaches, visual blurring. No one could easily name what this problem was, so it becomes one of these new-age diseases and people looked at her very sceptically: "What is this environmental hypersensitivity? How could this be related to the workplace?" In fact, there were medical opinions that had been sought and brought forward and presented on behalf of the employer in trying to dismiss this claim, suggesting that this was all in this woman's head.

It took some time, but with the persistence of trying to get good medical advice, and with the tribunal, being an independent tribunal, referring this person for more tests so we could get some of the information we felt we needed, the legitimacy of her case was borne out.

That work won't get done on behalf of individuals if there isn't that independent appeal. When I see the government actually taking steps in legislation to take away the right to compensation for things like occupational chronic stress or putting limits on compensation for chronic pain, using words like after "the usual healing time," I have to wonder who's going to make that decision. What is the usual healing time for chronic pain? It's an area that's so poorly understood. I don't believe there is a usual healing time.

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Therefore, I think that decision will be made as an administrative decision, and I think that means that workers who are legitimately claiming compensation for a disability that arises out of the workplace are going to be denied access to compensation.

One of the other changes I can't fathom at all — and this one I really have a hard time understanding — is that the government intends to abolish the Occupational

Disease Panel and hand its responsibilities back to the board. The Occupational Disease Panel was created in the first place because the board never looked independently or sought independent research about the nature of occupational diseases.

I don't know if you remember back to the days of Johns-Manville and the link between asbestos and occupational disease. Do you remember when people used to laugh that off and used to say there was no connection, used to argue that it wasn't a legitimate claim to say that the problems these workers were having were related to the workplace? The same with asbestos miners.

Now you know what happens when they come in to remove asbestos in the building, the way in which all the protections have to be in place. We've learned something. It shouldn't take a body count in order to learn the scientific connections. That's the way we were operating back then. When enough of the Johns-Manville workers had died, then we said, "There's a connection." It's like when enough babies were born with deformities and they noticed that all the mothers had taken thalidomide, then they said, "Oh, there's a connection." It shouldn't take a body count.

The Occupational Disease Panel has done incredible research, has overseen and commissioned — they're not scientists themselves, they don't do the research themselves; they commission it and bring together reports from around the world. Their work is incredibly important. I had the opportunity to see some of the work from that panel presented to us as members of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, incredibly important work delving into the link between certain manufacturing processes or substances in use in workplaces and diseases that may or may not result from them. That's the nature of the research work that's done, ground-breaking work, internationally renowned work.

What possible reason could the government have to want to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel? Why wouldn't it make sense to continue a group which is internationally renowned and respected, which is understanding the relationship between work processes and substances and diseases, and setting standards to ensure that workers' exposure to these are in a way that is safe and that won't lead to the development of occupational disease?

Do you know what you're going back to by putting it back on the board? You're going back to a body count method. I implore you to rethink this. I'm very distressed by changes I've mentioned around chronic stress and chronic pain, I truly am, but I'm more distressed that you would do away with the Occupational Disease Panel and return to reliance on a body count; that we can only prove that workers have been exposed to harmful substances which have caused fatal diseases when there are enough bodies stacked up and enough families destroyed that the count is statistically significant.

People and families and workers, injured workers and workers who die on the job, are not statistics; they are members of our community, they are contributors to our society, they are people we should have a system in place to protect. Instead we see a government that is dismantling the system, that is introducing mean-spirited changes

that take benefits away from workers at the same time as they're reducing employer premiums to the tune of \$6 billion.

Workers' compensation has a proud history in Ontario. We need to study the legislation that's before us today very carefully. I hope the government will send this out for extensive public hearings. I hope you will listen to the people in the field who have experienced the existing system, who have experience before bodies like the Occupational Disease Panel and the independent Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal existed, people who can tell you the damage this bill will bring to the system of compensation.

The thing that worries me most is that perhaps the government doesn't care. When you change the purpose clause of the legislation to take out the word "fair" from the purpose of "fair compensation," I have to wonder, will you really listen?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I am pleased to stand for a couple of minutes and reply to the presentation the member for Beaches-Woodbine made this afternoon. While I would never question her sincere interest and concern for injured workers, I would certainly disagree with her final statement that this government does not care about injured workers; clearly we do, and clearly this bill demonstrates that we have a new focus and that's what we're trying to emphasize, trying to find every way possible to discourage accidents from happening in the workplace and to make sure our workplaces are as safe as they possibly can be.

I recall while I was sitting in opposition and the member for Beaches-Woodbine was, I believe, at that time the Minister of Economic Development when Bill 165 went through. Of all the ministers in the NDP government, I would say she was among the most responsible of the ministers, as was, I would say, the member for Nickel Belt, who is also in the chamber at the present time.

I recall how Bob Rae, the Premier of Ontario at the time, took a responsible approach to Workers' Compensation Board issues. In fact, I believe it was when he was presented with an actuarial report which indicated that the unfunded liability was well on its way to approaching \$30 billion in the year 2014 if changes weren't made that the chairman at the time, Odoardo Di Santo, who was formerly a member of the Ontario Legislature sitting with the NDP, was sacked by the government and a new management team was brought in. Then we received Bill 165, which had the effect of reducing the unfunded liability in a substantial way. I know it was difficult for the NDP members at the time to take this step, but certainly it was the responsible course of action.

I look forward to speaking at greater length on some of these issues when I get the chance. But I would thank the member for Beaches-Woodbine for her interpretation of what happened during those years.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You'll be surprised to know that I am not going to be talking about hospitals in St Catharines except to say the following: that those who have had injuries — this is how I relate that — under the auspices of the Workers' Compensation Board have from time to time required the use of hospital

services in the Niagara region. It's directly tied in. I express the hope that we will have all of the hospitals in the Niagara region existing five years from now, as I hope Montfort is existing in the Ottawa area, so that those who have accidents in the workplace will have somewhere to go.

This is a very difficult question to deal with, without a doubt, the issue of workers' compensation, because everybody — and this includes workers, representatives of workers and those who are involved in the management end of things — is looking for efficient management of the operation. They want to have those kinds of efficiencies in the management and operation of the WCB. Where the differences come are when we're dealing with the individual implications for workers in the province. There's nothing that's more devastating to someone than to be injured in the workplace and not be able to return to that workplace; an injury which often recurs, in terms of its implications, years down the line, and then a person tries to go back to deal with that recurrence and finds it difficult to obtain appropriate compensation.

This government is moving very much in a direction which I believe is detrimental to many in the workforce. Even though I don't subscribe to evil intentions by the government, I look and see that some of the provisions of this bill are going to be damaging to workers in this province.

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Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I wish to commend the member for Beaches-Woodbine for her comments and say to the government members that while this is obviously a very partisan forum, you should listen to the member for Beaches-Woodbine when she talks about workers' compensation. She has a long history of involvement and knows a great deal about it.

I feel that I've seen this movie before because I can recall when injured workers' problems were on the front steps of this assembly frequently. I know that there has been relative — and I use the word "relative" in quotation marks — peace with injured workers for the last few years because of some changes that were made.

If you roll back the changes that have been helpful to injured workers — not by being silly and not by simply raising benefits; that's not what I'm talking about — guess what? We're going to have injured workers on the front steps of this Legislature again.

I can remember one of my first political acts as an MPP when I was elected: I went on TV one night in Sudbury and invited every injured worker who felt aggrieved to come down to the local WCB office the next morning at 9 o'clock. They had a hell of a time getting several hundred injured workers out of that office the next day, and I advised them to continue to engage in their act of civil disobedience because of the way they were being treated by the Workers' Compensation Board.

Since then, there have been a lot of changes, but if you roll the clock back, many of us will be out there again, once again encouraging injured workers to come down here and raise proper hell at the Legislature, and so they should. It's their livelihoods, not yours, and they have a right to fight for it.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I thank the member for Beaches-Woodbine for her contribution as well as the member for St Catharines.

The member for St Catharines talked about the importance of getting people back to work and I agree with him on that, and everyone I've ever spoken to on Bill 99, on WCB, agrees with the need for us to get people back to work. Bill 99 addresses that by putting a very concrete obligation on to employers and employees and it also provides a new system with nurse practitioners to make sure that back-to-work process is not abused. I think that's a vital part of the bill and the member touched on it, but I think he should be encouraged by it, not discouraged.

I also find the member for Beaches-Woodbine saying that the unfunded liability is not a problem a little hard to take. As the member for Wellington said, when the third party was in office they were told the unfunded liability was going to be \$30 billion by the year 2014 if something wasn't done, so they took steps with Bill 165 to address that, to reduce the size of the unfunded liability. Their steps — the Friedland formula — were brought in to do just that and to get the unfunded liability to under \$18 billion by 2014. It's not a good enough funding ratio, though.

Right now, Ontario's 42% funding ratio is the second worst in Canada. British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon have ratios ranging from 96% to as high as 130%; ours is at 42%. Part of the problem that this has had before is that between 1991 and 1995 the third party had to dip into the investment funds. Those are there to create revenue and they're there to be used for the workers long into the future. We can't allow that to happen again.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, you have two minutes.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate the comments from all of my colleagues. Let me primarily respond to the member for Niagara Falls who just got up and put words in my mouth. I say to you, sir, please don't do that. I would like you to check the record and see where I said that the unfunded liability is not a problem. What I said is that it is not a crisis. What I said is that the steps that were taken by the Friedland formula changes and others are bringing it under control and that perhaps more needs to be done. But if you believe that more needs to be done and if you believe that it's a crisis, I don't.

Why the heck are you giving away \$6 billion to employers? Why are you giving away \$6 billion of revenues and why are you making that up by cutting benefits to injured workers? Check the record. That's what I said and I think it's a very valid question.

I want to say I hope as we go through this process that in two or three areas the government members will remain open to change. I know you're going to proceed. I know the way this government operates; you've seen it. They will not be swayed from your course of action. But there are certain things that are really extremely disturbing. I ask you, please, first and foremost, to review the attack on the older injured worker, on those people whose pensions were so small and they have the 100% inflation

protection. You will put those people back in poverty. Please examine that. They're a small group. Unfortunately, as they're older citizens, the group is getting smaller all the time. Please look at that. Please look at the Occupational Disease Panel and the incredibly important work that's done there. Please look at the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. I ask you, implore you, to look at restoring the balance that was created in the historic deal of 1914.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the second reading debate of Bill 99, the workplace safety and insurance legislation.

With this bill, the Minister of Labour is proposing changes that are needed if we truly care about keeping people safe and preventing injuries and deaths in workplaces across Ontario. The essence of these new proposed changes can be best described as safety first. Safety and prevention of injury are the primary goals of this bill: safety and prevention foremost. If we can prevent injuries and deaths in the workplace, we are making an extremely valuable contribution to the health and wellbeing of workers.

In my capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, responsible for small business, I know that these changes will not only enhance the working conditions of people in Ontario and Wellington, but also significantly improve our competitiveness, our productivity and create a positive climate for new jobs.

With the adoption of the minister's proposal, safety in the workplace and prevention of injuries will become the most important of priorities. Bill 99 changes the role of workers' compensation so that the prevention of injury is the most important priority for the Workers' Compensation Board. The board's primary emphasis has historically been simply on compensation. Now I need not say that compensation is and continues to be very important, but injured people need more than that. The weakness of the old system has been that its central role is compensation and not the prevention of injury. The old system put the cart before the horse. This new system will put the horse squarely in front of the cart.

If we can prevent more accidents from occurring in the workplace, we can make an extremely valuable contribution to the quality of life for workers in Ontario and keep the system affordable so that assistance will be available for injured workers today and in the future.

Consider these accidents that have taken place in Ontario and the toll it takes on workers and workers' families:

In a manufacturing plant in Cambridge a punch press operator accidentally causes a press to come down on another worker's hand that rests momentarily on one of the machine's guideposts. The injured worker had three fingers of his hand cut off and a two-and-a-half-inch-diameter hole was cut out of the palm of his hand. Although doctors did their very best to reconstruct his hand, he is permanently handicapped.

Take the case of a 21-year-old forklift driver from Kitchener who had not received operator safety training in driving the forklift. He died at the retail store where he

worked when the forklift he was driving with a load of topsoil toppled over during a turn that he was making and crushed him while he was trying to leap out of the forklift to safety.

We in Ontario must make every possible effort to prevent these tragedies from happening. With the proper training and the proper safety precautions many accidents in the workplace are avoidable. Deaths and injuries leave victims in their wake, and injury not only disrupts a person's ability to work but can also have a devastating personal impact.

The loss of a limb, for instance, is a physical and emotional tragedy. Normal activities like driving a car, going for a walk, participating in recreational and sporting activities and doing simple household chores can be seriously compromised or impossible to continue. It takes some people many years to come to terms with the emotional scars and the physical limitations caused by a serious injury, and some never do.

We must also realize that the person's injury affects his family and anyone who is close to him or her, and if we can reduce the number of accidents in workplaces, then we will prevent a great deal of human suffering.

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Bill 99 takes several steps in this direction. After the passage of Bill 99, should it be passed, the board will become the centre of a network dedicated to educating employers, employees and the public about occupational health and safety. It will increase the financial incentive for employers and employees to invest in prevention and early return-to-work programs. Safe workplace associations will provide education and training in the prevention of workplace injury and illness. The Minister of Labour and the new board will create partnerships with research organizations, universities and other bodies in prevention, return to work, compensation and occupational disease issues.

Getting people back to work after recovering from an injury is another important component of Bill 99. The bill requires employers and employees to remain in constant contact with one another during the recovery period. Employers will also be required to identify and arrange suitable employment for workers, and workers will be required to assist employers in their requests for information. The board can also provide financial incentives to employers to help defer the cost of modification in the workplace to accommodate injured workers.

These requirements have several benefits. By keeping in close touch with employers, injured workers overcome the sense of isolation and disruption that can occur after an accident. The legislation encourages employers and workers to form a partnership that can lead to a better understanding of the workers' injuries and the type of work they can realistically undertake after they return to work, and if needed, workplace modifications for workers with permanent injuries will enable workers to return to the workplace.

Bill 99's requirements encourage as a goal continued participation in the workplace. Most people, if given a choice and if they're physically capable, would much prefer to continue working. Work contributes to a person's self-esteem, sense of fulfilment and wellbeing,

and it enables people to develop their full potential and be active, contributing members in their communities.

In recognition of the serious financial difficulties that the Workers' Compensation Board faces today, Bill 99 will return the board to its original responsibility of providing workplace accident insurance. Benefits will be paid only for work-related injuries. The Workers' Compensation Board's unfunded liability today stands at about \$10.4 billion. That's the net difference between what the Workers' Compensation Board owes in benefits to injured workers compared to its assets and what it can expect to take in through the premiums it collects in the future. Without needed reforms to the system, that amount would grow to some \$18 billion by the year 2014. We need to get back on track to reducing the unfunded liability to zero by the year 2014, and that's what this bill does.

As a government, I believe we have an obligation to reduce and eliminate this unfunded liability so that injured workers who need our help in the future will receive the assistance they require. It would be irresponsible to ignore the huge financial problem that the Workers' Compensation Board faces today.

No one is happy that workers will receive less in accident insurance and inflation protection in the future, and I know that the government takes no pleasure in having to reduce workers' benefits. However, we know that this action is required; otherwise, the unfunded liability would grow to over \$18 billion, again by the year 2014, and would seriously jeopardize the integrity of the system for future injured workers, as well as creating an upwards spiral of increasing assessment rates for employers. This would, in turn, discourage business investment and job creation in Ontario. Ontario employers now pay the second-highest assessment rates in Canada, and we need to have competitive assessment rates in order to encourage new job creation.

Even Bob Rae, while Premier of Ontario, recognized that this was a problem, and in an effort to reduce the unfunded liability, his government passed Bill 165. We know that Bill 165 took some \$18 billion out of the system by reducing the amount of inflation protection in Workers' Compensation Board pensions.

I am very pleased that the Minister of Labour has indicated that she is supportive of sending this bill to a standing committee of the Legislature for public hearings, and I know that she will be very interested in hearing the comments that come back. Everyone who has an idea, a suggestion or a concern will have an opportunity to provide that advice to the government during the course of the public hearings. I certainly look forward to hearing what other members of this House have to say with regard to Bill 99.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I always listen with great interest to what the member opposite has to say about the various issues. The thing that should be underlined and that the people of Ontario should be familiar with is the fact that over the next 17 years or so, if this is implemented, there will be about \$15 billion less paid to injured workers than is currently the situation. We can sugarcoat it all we want, but that's

really what it's all about: paying less to workers, paying a lower percentage of what their wages are, going from 90% to 85%. During that same period of time, employers will be saving about \$6 billion in premium costs as well.

So there is a shift here, a definite shift that I think everyone ought to be aware of: that employers are going to be paying less and the injured workers are also going to be getting less. It's all well and nice to talk about unfunded liability, but if you didn't make these two shifts, perhaps you wouldn't have to worry about the unfunded liability to the same extent that this member is talking about.

He talks about the fact that we have to do whatever we can to make sure that workers don't get injured on the job. Everyone agrees with that, but that's not really what this bill is about. This bill is about taking rights away from injured workers and, at the same time, lowering the premiums required from employers. As we have these hearings after second reading, as we travel through the province, undoubtedly we will hear from many of these individuals about how it will affect their lives in the future. I look forward to that debate that will be taking place not only in this House but also throughout the province as the committee travels.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): In response to the member for Wellington's comments, like him, I too look forward to this bill going to committee. I wish it wasn't before us and I wish we didn't have to take it to committee, because I did hope that the government would not have proceeded with this bill. But since they are proceeding with it, I hope that in the committee stage the government members will actually listen to what undoubtedly we will hear from many injured workers and their organizations and others about some of the problems, yes, that still need to be addressed at the Workers' Compensation Board, but not the particular kinds of problems that this bill addresses and the way in which this bill addresses them.

At the end of the day, if this bill stays essentially as it is — and given this government's track record so far, I have no reason to believe otherwise — what we will see is injured workers getting less in the way of help and assistance and compensation for their injuries, employers in some cases getting a break, and the system that was set up at the beginning of the century to assist injured workers will be in a shambles because it will not continue to do what it is supposed to do: It will not continue to provide fair compensation for people who are injured on the job. I would think that at the end of the day, whatever our partisan stripe, that has to remain a fundamental part of what we do in this area of legislation.

Yes, we took actions as a government under Bill 165, as the member mentioned, to deal with the unfunded liability and also to increase, as a result of that same piece of legislation, benefits for some of the lowest-paid workers in the province. Those were the older injured workers, who received up to \$200 a month increase in their benefits. That I know is going to be put in jeopardy. Although it's being maintained, it's going to be put in jeopardy as the continuing pressures grow with the way in which this government is tackling this problem.

Mr Maves: I want to thank the member for Wellington for his contribution to the debate. He brings some history himself to the debate, having been through the debate on Bill 165 in the early 1990s, and I appreciate that.

One of the things he mentioned was the board's new focus on prevention, and that is a key to changing the workers' compensation system. I was pleased to hear recently that the new chair of the Workers' Compensation Board committed to a 33% reduction in workplace injuries by the year 2000. I'm pleased to see that someone in his position is setting goals, positive goals like that, because I think it's that type of goal-setting which will get people in the workplace and get people who work in the compensation board system to take it to heart and to strive for those goals. Lord knows, a 33% reduction, a 20% reduction, any reduction whatsoever in lost-time injuries and workers getting injured is helpful. So I was pleased that the member mentioned that and I'm also pleased at the direction the Workers' Compensation Board is heading.

1640

The member opposite mentioned the government's track record of listening. I think we listen quite intently, and that's evident in today's announcement on Who Does What. We asked for a better scenario, if someone could come up with it. AMO may not be better, but AMO came up with one, and we listened and we're moving on that.

Also, during Minister Jackson's consultations, we listened to workers. They said, "Make sure you maintain the office of the worker adviser," and we've done that. They said, "Maintain compensation for repetitive strain injuries," and we've done that.

I look forward to the hearings. I look forward to hearing what the members opposite have to say, and members on this side of the House, because this will be an evolving system. We owe that to workers, we owe that to employers.

I thank the member for Wellington for his comments.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? The member for Wellington can sum up.

Mr Arnott: I'm pleased to have the chance to respond to those who responded to my speech.

First, to the member for Kingston and The Islands: Thank you very much for your compliments. I would say to you in response, we need to have competitive assessment rates in Ontario in order to encourage job creation. I think the member is quite well aware of that. I think he's also probably aware that the reduction in benefits that is included in Bill 99 brings us in line in terms of compensation to what some of the provinces in Canada that are headed by Liberal administrations are currently offering their injured workers, most notably, I believe, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

He also, I think, recognizes that the unfunded liability is a very serious problem that has to be dealt with. I think he would be one who would also agree that we need to employ sound financial management at the Workers' Compensation Board in order to ensure that the benefits are there over the long run.

Thanks to the member for Dovercourt for his comments. I know he knows that the Minister of Labour will listen very closely to whatever constructive suggestions

come forward during the course of this debate and certainly during the hearings. I'm sure there will be a response that most care-minded individuals will certainly agree that she has done a good job in that regard.

He and I would agree that we need to have fair compensation for injured workers, but I would also add we need to have affordable compensation for injured workers. I think he also knows, and he did indicate, that the \$200-a-month special provision that was brought forward by the New Democratic government is maintained during the future with this Bill 99.

Thanks also to the member for Niagara Falls for his comments. I would like to congratulate him on his new appointment as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour. I know he'll do an excellent job in that capacity. He pointed out the good job that the new chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board is doing. That's a very valid point in that the measurable goals that chairman has set for a reduction of incidence of accidents in the workplace we'll be held accountable for in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am also pleased to join the debate and hopefully make my contribution on this important piece of legislation.

Last year, on November 26, 1996, the minister introduced Bill 99, as we call it. The major points of the bill I would say were two: (1) to reduce the rights of injured workers and (2), and I think most important, was to reduce the benefits of injured workers.

What could have been the rationale for that? What could it have been that brought the minister and the government to make these changes to such important legislation, legislation that affects workers throughout Ontario, in the workplace, whatever they may be, as the member for Wellington mentioned, be they a truck driver or someone working at a punch press? As the member himself mentioned, they are all workers making their contribution to our Ontario economy and they are all workers who, no matter what they do, where they work, indoors or outdoors, should be given and afforded every measure of protection.

The other was to fund the 5% cut which the government has allocated to the employers' premium. I believe it would have been much better to freeze the funding or freeze the employers' premium and keep the benefits to the employees as they were allocated in the old legislation. I'm sure there is no government member and no worker who would like to see workers hurt in the workplace, so I wonder why the government would be introducing a piece of legislation which clearly penalizes workers in the workplace.

When the bill was introduced by the minister, it was introduced with the auspices or under the pretence, if you will, that it would accomplish a number of things, but mainly it was introduced because the government felt the system was broken and needed fixing. It was introduced to a system that has become a bureaucratic mess, time-consuming and that continues to fail to adequately meet the needs of both employers and employees.

That is a good prefix to the bill, but what is the first thing the bill does and the minister in her statement says? First, "Our reform will restore the financial stability of

the Workers' Compensation Board." It is not to the workers' rights, it is not to the workers' benefits; their first attention is aimed at "the financial viability of the Workers' Compensation Board." I would say that the first and most important reform would have been not only to maintain or improve the working conditions in the workplace but also to maintain and improve the benefits of injured workers.

As we know, the government has implemented a number of cuts, cuts that affect everybody, especially workers and more so the injured workers. How can the government and the minister say that their first responsibility would be towards "the financial viability of the Workers' Compensation Board" instead of making sure that this viability should address the workers themselves, working conditions and workers' benefits?

Also, it goes further. It says "to ensure that the system remains fair and compassionate." I wonder, how can we call this a fair and compassionate system when it does not address the most important points of injured workers and of workers in the workplace?

The minister says that to ensure all of that, all employees have to pay their fair share. Does it mean that the employees have to have reduced benefits or reduced working conditions to pay their fair share? I don't call that paying their fair share, I really don't.

Second, she says the reforms will "refocus the system as an insurance plan for workplace illness and injury that pays benefits for injuries and illness caused by work." What else would it pay and what else should it pay for?

The network of agencies serving workers and employers will be restructured. Isn't that nice. I think it should be readdressed. Instead of saying "restructured," we should be saying it has been either reduced —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Point of order, Madam Chair: I believe there's no quorum. Would you check for that, please.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum, clerk?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Chair.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

1650

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Yorkview, continue.

Mr Sergio: As I was saying, the second reform that Bill 99 proposes is to restructure not only the board itself but the various agencies. I have to say that instead of restructuring those very same agencies, they should protect the workers in the workplace. I think this has been totally reduced and in many cases that protection of agencies has been totally eliminated. What is left is that the balance that used to be there is no longer there, and now it has been shifted totally in favour of the employer, leaving employees in workplaces everywhere to fend mostly for themselves. I don't think that's fair.

I'm not saying that the bill as it is presented should not address some of the concerns that, yes, belong to address the concerns of the employers, but having done so, having eliminated many of those protections imposed by government, now we feel and workers feel that they are left on their own, to fend for themselves against the

attacks of the new legislation and some unscrupulous employers.

Thirdly, it says that the bill would firmly entrench "the goal of prevention of workplace illness and injury in the workers' compensation system," which the minister claims would be her top priority. I don't dispute that; I'm sure she means well when she says that. But again, the content of the bill does not address that as the top priority, and it's very disappointing to many injured workers.

Fourthly, "the bill will improve the return to work in a safe and timely manner by requiring workers, employers and the board to work cooperatively together." That's easy to say; that's hard to do. The government is saying, "I'll leave it up to you, workers and employers, to sort it out." I believe this is an area where we just can't leave the wellbeing of the workers, especially the injured workers, solely to the discretion of the employers. We've got to have legislation in place where the injured workers have recourse. The last recourse would be to a government body where they can get the necessary attention that they deserve when they are in trouble with particular employers.

Fifthly, "the changes will enhance self-reliance by obliging workers and employers to cooperate in preventing injuries and in managing the consequences of injuries when they do happen." As I just mentioned, this leaves the government totally out of the picture in assisting, with regulations, the workplace and the employees. Now we are saying, "Employer, we'll leave it up to you to self-regulate and make sure you provide a clean, safe environment, a safe workplace." I'm not suggesting that employers are not reliable, don't try and do their best to make sure that the workplace is kept safe. I'm saying that too many injured workers and too many deaths are caused in our workplaces because of lack of safety measures, security, proper attention from both untrained employees and employers at the same time.

I believe this is not an area where we can say to the employer: "We'll leave it up to you. You look after your own place of employment. Just make sure you do a good job and keep it safe, keep it clean." We just cannot do that. As we will see — and I hope I have the time to mention some of that — the bill proposes to eliminate some of those very agencies that have been providing assistance and service. They had been provided as a refuge for injured workers to go and seek assistance against the system that many, many times fails the injured worker.

I don't know if it would have been proper perhaps to rename Bill 99 not as the Workers' Compensation Board reform; perhaps it would have made more sense to rename it the Reduction of Workers' Rights and Benefits Act, because this is exactly what it does.

What does Bill 99 exactly do? To injured workers it means the reduction, the elimination over time of some \$15 billion, as the minister said, by the year 2014, while at the same time it will save employers some \$6 billion during the same period. Let me say that this will not lower the cost of doing business in the workplace, it will not lower the cost of doing business in Ontario, and it will not help any company or industry to be more

competitive. I think there is a lot more to it if we have to make our products, our workplaces, our industries more competitive. I don't think we should be looking at the injured workers especially, to accomplish some of that on the backs of those very less fortunate workers.

It is cutting the insurance premium by 5% to employers. Yes, it helps, but again, that is done at the sole expense of the injured workers, and injured workers find that most unfair. As of July 1, 1997, all previous injuries fall under the old system, including the benefits, but what about aggravating circumstances? I don't have to tell you that I get injured workers on a weekly basis, if not on a daily basis, who come back with aggravated situations caused over the years, either age or whatever have you, or because they were forced to continue to work under certain situations or circumstances, and the situation has indeed been aggravated.

1700

I think we have to recognize that. There is nowhere else. I think the system must be fair to employees, but most especially to those injured workers where they are forced — while we say we want to make sure that we put them back into the workforce in the best possible conditions at the most expeditious time, yes indeed, but we have to assist those people to go back into the workforce and try to earn what they were earning before. In many cases not only is that not possible, getting a job is totally impossible, especially nowadays.

Compensation to the injured workers has been cut from 90% to 85% of their net pay. I don't think that is fair when everything is going up, when so many other cuts are being imposed on the workers as well. Oh yes, the inflation index is capped. What does this mean? Does this mean another 4% cut? In the long term this will see a big chunk cut off from the pensions of the injured workers. Over a period of some 18 to 20 years this will be cut, to the tune of some 60%. The legislation does not spell that out totally, but indeed this is what the legislation, as it is proposed, will accomplish. Can we call that being fair and compassionate to our injured workers? Certainly not.

The cuts to pensions: For example, after 12 months off a job, the board normally sets aside 10% towards workers' payments for their retirement at age 65 if they survive. This has been cut to 5%. A cut of 5% may not mean much, but it represents a 50% cut to the contribution to the injured worker's pension.

We go further than that with the proposed legislation, and it is not the benefits or the rights, but now it is the powers that also are being taken away or given to the new board. To the average injured worker it is very difficult to get to know the real workings, the real inside of the legislation, but what will this do, what does this mean to the injured workers?

Yes, the board will have the power to collect from new employers, and that's fine. I think that's fine, but it causes a problem because the new employer can be a small businessman, can be a small manufacturing company that may have inherited the bungling of a former employer, and this will cause some strain on a new company that is trying to move up and grow.

For example, the mandatory release of personal information, confidential information. What does this do?

This creates serious anxiety among the workforce, especially among injured workers. The reduced power, for example, of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. I don't have to tell you how much this is being used by injured workers, and when I say "injured workers," this is a continuous coming and going by injured workers during a number of years. It's not only that they have settled their case now or five years ago, 10 years ago and it's over and done. They keep coming back every few months because of a number of complaints and problems and appeals and so forth. So this WCB appeals tribunal was a good place where injured workers would go and seek that assistance. The tribunal is no longer independent.

How do all these changes affect the injured workers? The power, if you will, has shifted. We don't have the balance any more. The worker is being penalized. The employer has indeed acquired more power, and now with the lack of legislation and the self-regulated workplace, the injured worker finds himself or herself having to fight with whatever means he or she may have at his or her disposal, to fight an army, teams of well-trained, well-paid consultants on behalf of employers. On the one hand we have eliminated those agencies that offer assistance and protections for the injured worker; on the other hand we have created another circle where now they have to fend off with whatever means they have those agents, consultants on behalf of small and large companies, and fight for their claims and their rights.

I don't think that our government, that your government should impose that on our injured workers, let alone that they have to reassess their own particular individual and family situation because of the circumstances that have been created due to the injury, and in many instances it's either very traumatic or long-lasting. But no government should be imposing on their workers, especially injured workers, that they will have to fend for themselves and face those armies of well-trained consultants and be left on their own. We have eliminated those agencies where at least the injured worker had an independent body where he or she could go and get much-needed assistance.

What do we have here now? The injured worker is faced with: "Well, you have to fill in your own application now. You're on your own, and we want to make sure that your injury is work-related. It must be readdressed to exactly the place, the location, the time of the accident and you have to do it on your own. Also, we're going to cut the time you will have during which to file that particular application."

I find it unfair, as do most workers, period, let alone injured workers. As you know, we have a very multi-ethnic population and workforce out there. Many of them just can't on their own, without some assistance, provide the necessary information, proper information, correct information to the Workers' Compensation Board, the employer and the government as well. I think that's unfair. I think it's a responsibility that the government has failed to assume and provide the injured workers with that necessary protection.

Your government, the Harris government, says Ontario assessment rates are too high. Is that a reason to cut the

rights and benefits of employees or injured workers? It goes on to say that injured workers are overcompensated. I would be ashamed if my government were to say to a poor injured worker, "We're going to do this to you, we're going to cut your benefits, we're going to cut your rights because you are overcompensated."

It says that illness and injuries are seldom caused by work. I don't know, but from the information I have, the figures that I have, and they are provided by the minister in her own report, there are thousands upon thousands of workers who not only die, and we have many, many thousands who die each year here in Ontario, but thousands of injured workers in the workforce, work-related, and we are saying this is not related to the workplace?

1710

The Harris government keeps on saying they're giving employers the money to improve health and safety and we know it's not the case. This government has introduced and has approved legislation to reduce and eliminate those very protections that provide a safe environment in the workplace for our employees. The truth is that injured workers with permanent disabilities are suffering from loss of income and, more often than not, are forced to find a very menial job, if they can find any job at all.

Speed-ups, new technology and reduced health and safety enforcement are causing a rise in workplace injuries, and hazardous substances at work are causing some 8,000 deaths a year in Ontario. Do we take it that the government has come to accept that, when we have a government that says, "Injured workers are overcompensated for illness and injury" — and I will add death — "that are seldom caused by work," when we have some 8,000 Ontario workers who die each year? Are we sending out a message that we find that acceptable, that it's okay to have 6,000, 7,000, 8,000 workers dying each year? I don't think so. I don't think this is the message the government should be sending out to employers or employees anywhere in our province.

Let me say that when we are saying, especially to the workers who do the most menial, heavy jobs, working long hours, that we're cutting those benefits, those workers are being affected like any other person in Ontario with the cuts that this government is imposing upon them. Let me say that those injured workers are not immune to increases, for example, in their food bills, or monthly rental bills, or taxes if they have a house, or education costs if they still have young children.

I had prepared myself with material here to go for a couple of hours, but I can see I only have a few seconds. Let me say in concluding my remarks that the bill as proposed does not do what it professes to do on behalf of the injured workers, and indeed, those particular groups would look to the government to provide that assistance so they have rights at the workplace and they continue to enjoy some reasonable status within our social fabric, and I hope that the benefits can be restored.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in the House currently.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: I just wanted to comment on the speech made by the member for Yorkview and agree with him in his comments in reminding members of this House that in fact what this bill is all about is cutting the benefits paid to injured workers. We estimate some \$15 billion will be taken out of the pockets of injured workers as a result of this bill being enacted. Some \$6 billion of that, we understand, by changes that the government has already brought about by regulation changes, will be turned back to employers in terms of premium cuts, and this under the guise of the government wanting to deal with the unfunded liability. They will know that this was an issue that we dealt with when we were the government, to some criticism that we received at the time, but the issue of addressing the unfunded liability has been dealt with. It has been addressed. The unfunded liability is well on its way to being looked after.

The actions taken in this legislation go far beyond what is necessary to deal with the unfunded liability, and this bill is simply a smokescreen to allow for the reduction of benefits of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, people who have been injured on the job, people who in some cases have lost their lives, and obviously their families are continuing to bear that loss. But what we are seeing here is not an interest in refocusing the legislation on health and safety. If that was the concern, you wouldn't have done away with the workplace health and safety structure that we had put in place. This is about taking money out of the pockets of injured workers. There's no two ways about it.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's interesting to join the so-called debate on this subject and to hear the member for Dovercourt in a state of perpetual denial about the unfunded liability. To say that the issue of the unfunded liability has been dealt with is clearly — I don't know — some sort of a fantasy thought. I presume he is relying on the statistical accuracy and projections of the revenue people of the WCB from the old days, that if they kept it at the rate and everything assumed was going to become reality, the assumptions would become reality, the unfunded liability would be cleared up by 2014. It is completely ridiculous to accept the premise of those assumptions, because it was assuming back in those days that you would have economic growth going on for the next 15 to 18 years of about 3.5%. It's completely absurd to expect that that kind of an economic cycle would continue, regardless of who the government was.

I think the issue is about the unfunded liability and the failure of both opposition parties to deal with the issue. Even the previous Davis government is part of being responsible for this situation. What the folks across the way did was aid and abet through the inflation protection that the Conservative government of those days initiated, and that's why we're in the pickle today with the problem. To deny that there's an unfunded liability, to deny that there's a crisis, is completely unacceptable to injured workers who do realize that if you're going to have a system available, you've got to have one that has fiscal responsibility, and we don't have that today.

Mr Gerretsen: I totally agree with the member opposite when he said in his very last statement that we do not have fiscal responsibility today. I agree with that.

Mr Hastings: In this system.

Mr Gerretsen: No. You said we don't have fiscal responsibility today.

Madam Speaker, you and I well know that it is totally irresponsible to give people a \$5-billion tax cut when at the same time this province still has a deficit annually of some \$7 billion or \$8 billion and when the public debt of this province is going to rise from \$100 billion when that government took over to \$120 billion by the time they're through. That is fiscally irresponsible.

1720

I agree with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, and it is finally nice to hear a Tory actually say in this House not only that it's fiscally irresponsible but that maybe some of the problems that have occurred in this world actually started with Bill Davis. Everything has always been blamed on the last 10 years. He admitted that some of it actually started with his government. Because let's remember that of the \$100-billion debt that was here when they took over, \$35 billion of that was acquired prior to 1985 when there were 17 years of Conservative deficits in this province. The last balanced budget that we had, by the way, was in 1989.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr Gerretsen: But we had 17 years of deficit-related problems that contributed to the first \$35 billion of the public debt that we have currently.

I would just simply like to congratulate my colleague from Yorkview. He puts everything in a very succinct way. He knows what this bill is really all about: It's an attack on the workers. What's going to happen is that this government is taking \$15 billion out of the workers' pockets and giving \$6 billion of that back to the employers.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise today and participate in the comments on the member for Yorkview. I want to thank the member for Fort York for allowing me to speak in his time, because I know that he, like myself, remembers the Ontario Liberal Plan of 1995, and the public has not forgotten. This is the provincial red book, volume 1. It says about the workers' compensation system, Madam Speaker, and you might be interested in hearing this:

"Ontario's workers' compensation system is a mess. High premiums are chasing away investment and jobs. The unfunded liability is out of control, soaring by \$2 million a day. Workers receive a deplorable level of service from a system that doesn't focus enough attention on getting them back to work. The WCB is failing both the employers who pay for it and the injured workers it's supposed to serve."

It goes on to say:

"A Liberal government will:

"Freeze WCB rates paid by employers.

"Change the makeup of the WCB board of directors and make it less partisan and more accountable to a wider range of stakeholders and the people of Ontario.

"Improve the administration of the WCB in hiring a chief executive officer with a strong background in accounting and the administration of insurance.

"Speed up the time it takes to process claims by better training adjudicators...and streamlining the appeals process.

"Create a WCB return-to-work department that will help clients develop individual return-to-work programs.

"Cut down the fraud by creating an investigative and internal audit department that will signal zero tolerance for fraud and investigate all allegations.

"Put the WCB on a sound financial footing by eliminating overpayments to injured workers, cutting administrative costs and improving the rate of return on the investment portfolio...."

So I say to the member for Yorkview and the member from Kingston and The Islands, why did you not vote for Bill 15 and why are you opposing Bill 99 if you want to bring about those changes?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Yorkview, you may sum up.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Let's hear those answers. Good questions.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, come to order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order. Member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: I really enjoyed the various exchanges and input from the member for Dovercourt and my neighbour in Etobicoke-Rexdale and my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands, as well as the member for Scarborough Centre. But while you keep on dwelling on this unfunded liability, let me say that what's really missing in this particular piece of legislation —

Mr Hastings: They're wealthy in the WCB.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order.

Mr Sergio: — is the mental and psychological effect of this legislation which causes concern among our workers and the injured workers. There is none of that in the proposed legislation.

Let me tell you what's missing in this legislation, my colleagues, especially on the government side over there. There is absolutely nothing with respect to increasing funding for education and prevention of injuries in the workplace. That should be a concern and not the unfunded liability. Let me say this: that the fear of reprisal, of losing either a job or being demoted in the workplace, is a major concern of many workers out in our many workplaces.

With respect to lack of education — these are not my words but let me read this briefly — "In this environment of intimidation and shrinking enforcement, some 800 Canadians give their lives at work each year because of accidents caused by poor work training and faulty, ill-maintained equipment, and another 5,400" —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time has expired.

Further debate? The member for Fort York.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate the applause from the government members as I'm about to speak.

Mr Bradley: I'm going to watch it on TV.

Mr Marchese: I know you will. Mr Bradley's going to monitor the whole thing on TV. I know he's going to do that; he always does.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, he's going to be watching it from his office.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill and add to some of the comments that my colleagues have made — the member for Hamilton Centre, who has covered this bill thoroughly, and the member for Beaches-Woodbine, who I listened to from my office for 20 minutes of her half-hour speech. I tell you, they covered the field thoroughly. But I have a few things to add to this bill. It is for that reason that I'm here. I want to give the members who were clapping for me a reason as to why I'm so keen on this and want to give some background.

I worked at the Workers' Compensation Board for a year and a half from the year 1977 to the middle of 1979. It is because of that experience that I have a keen interest in injured workers and the Workers' Compensation Board. I learned a great deal while I was there, learned about the painful experiences of injured workers, learned about the psychological pain of workers who have relied on their backs to do their work all of a sudden losing their ability to be able to use their backs, if they were manual workers in construction, and not knowing what to do next because they didn't have the skills or the fortune to have had the ability to have gone to school in places where they came from, and as a result one of the few skills they had was to work hard to build this country.

After an injury that disabled those workers, they found themselves in a very painful situation, both physical and psychological, because they now had lost their earning ability and the strong desire to work. Not only did they lose that self-esteem which gave them meaning, but they also lost in the eyes of their family the earning power to be able to provide. That was a powerful loss for injured workers. The feeling of being unable to provide, being disabled and therefore unable to provide, is a powerful feeling.

I was an adjudicator, called a claims adjudicator. We adjudicated on injured worker claims. We had many opportunities to face injured workers. I tell you, those were not pleasant experiences, because when you have to see face to face the pain of the injured worker who has lost the earning power, it isn't easy to deal with it. It is easier to have a claim in front of you, a form 7, as I believe it's still called, and it is easy to say that the man fell off the roof, lost a leg, lost an eye, injured his head, injured the brain in serious ways. They say, "Ah, that's an easy claim." They move it on, pass it on. It's easy on paper to be able to adjudicate that, but when you have to face that individual eye to eye, it isn't easy at all.

1730

It was painful for people like me to work in a place like that for long, because you just can't handle their pain. I know what it's about. I know because I worked for two summers on construction both for carpenters and for masons, those who build houses, in construction,

putting the brick to the house. They were painful summers, I have to tell you, getting up in the morning, particularly my work with the bricklayers as a manual worker, a painful experience to go through.

Mr Gerretsen: That's real work.

Mr Marchese: And I loved the work. Real work, indeed. I enjoyed it, I have to tell you. But waking up at 6 o'clock in the morning with my wrists in pain every morning, I thought to myself, "How do these workers do it day in and day out?"

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Frank, I'm sorry, I missed your comment. I want to hear from you, though, because I'm interested.

The Acting Speaker: Please address the Chair, member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Through you, Madam Chair — I'm interested in the members of government and their feelings around injured workers. I want to know what they're feeling around that.

But getting up at 6 o'clock in the morning every day, thinking, "How am I going to lift those 10-inch blocks on top of that scaffold?" was painful, just the thought of how to do that was painful to me. There were workers doing that day in and day out for 20, 30 years. All I had to do it for was one summer. It was easy for me to leave it. I tell you, having had that experience, it wasn't something I wanted to go back to for a lifetime. I knew how tough it was, and how easy it was for those workers to get injured.

I saw a lot of workers who were teased by the employer when they claimed they had an injury, as if to suggest that they're not real men should they scream in pain because they twisted wrongly and all of a sudden they have a back pain. Some of those construction workers are pretty tough, and their employers are tougher still. They demand a great deal of toughness from their men on the job. You're not allowed to have an injury. You go back the same day, even in your pain.

In the early years, some of those men weren't compensated because they didn't know they could go to workers' compensation and some of those employers did not inform the injured workers they were entitled to it. These are the friends, these employers, that some of these people here on the other side, these honourable members, want to help.

I've had painful experiences as a manual worker in carpentry and with bricklayers and painful experiences having to face, as an adjudicator, those injured workers, men and women. I do that now, as a member in opposition, when I have to sit and deal with an injured worker who comes to my office crying about the pain he's experiencing and about the adjudicator who doesn't believe he's suffering that pain, and the poor wife and the children who came with him complaining how their lives have been destroyed by that injury.

It's painful stuff. It's painful for people like me to have to sit through that and have to deal with this pain. I can't help them, other than my ability to write a letter for that injured worker, as I see the tears of that man and the withheld tears of the wife having to suffer through that injury.

Some of the staffers of the Conservative Party are running away at the back, I see, perhaps thinking I might be exaggerating as I tell this story. This is not an exaggeration. All of us in opposition have had to deal with injured workers, and even the honourable members, if they're doing constituency work, have probably seen it too, because injured workers go to them as well. They will have seen the suffering of those families. They will know what it means for the injured worker to come in, in pain, and not be believed by the people who work at the Workers' Compensation Board. I tell you, it's hard to deal with. This is one of the most difficult parts of my job, workers' compensation.

I come with that experience, and I tell you that injured workers sometimes have no one to represent them. In many cases, if they have unions, they have the unions representing the workers and their appeals with the compensation board. But in many cases, for the 65% of the population not represented by a union, they have no one to represent them. Where they had the worker adviser to represent some of these people, if they knew about the existence of the worker adviser, that person's office has been limited, cut back. So they have no union to represent them, and the worker adviser, who used to help out to the best of their ability, that person's office has been reduced significantly.

But you know something? The employers hire expensive representatives. Places like Inco, General Motors and Ford hire expensive representatives; some of them are lawyers.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): High-priced.

Mr Marchese: High-priced indeed. They don't come cheap, you see. The employer wants to save money, and how do they do that? They have on staff full-time people representing the employer against the best interests of the injured worker, who, through no fault of his own, gets injured at his workplace. So you have these hired guns, hired by employers who have a lot of money, who are there to undermine the injured worker. Rather than helping the injured worker out, they're trying to undermine and get the claim disallowed. That's their job.

Most people don't know that. How would they know that? How would they know that, except someone like me, who has had the fortune, or misfortune, of having worked at the Workers' Compensation Board. As a result of that, I learned that they've got the best hired guns to help them out. But the poor injured worker, who does he or she have? They're on their own. The injured workers, woman or man, are on their own to defend themselves against a system that is complex and difficult to access.

I have to tell you, when you go to the Workers' Compensation Board, you are not treated very kindly at times. There are a lot of people who come with anger, and they leave with greater anger, because they're trying to seek justice for themselves and their family.

What does the Minister of Labour, Madame Witmer, do? Madame Witmer wants to help them out, she says. I look at her here every day as she answers questions from the member for Hamilton Centre, and she is an example of quietness, an example of serenity, clothed in antiseptic to the core. She tranquilizes the hell out of me every time she speaks, tranquilizes the hell out of me every time she

speaks. She stands up and she says, "Through you, Mr Speaker, to the member opposite," every time she answers the question, but ever so delicately and ever so quietly that she makes me feel she is looking after me and looking after the interests of every injured worker out there. How could you disbelieve the Minister of Labour when she speaks in those wonderful, soft, tranquilizing tones, making everybody believe that this poor woman could not cause harm to an ant, let alone a human being? That woman there is the perfect minister, perfect.

1740

I saw Mr Johnson the other day on television. There's another fine example of a man who is fully composed all the time; a tranquilizing effect on the world. He talked about how well this government is doing and how they are helping to keep the funds for health care and social services. They do this very softly so that at the end of the day you believe them, because how could these quiet young men and women —

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Young?

Mr Marchese: They're fairly young — cause any harm to anybody, especially humans? They wouldn't do that. So they choose these fine fellows and women, Witmer and Johnson, as their spokespeople, to tranquilize everybody.

They do an effective job, I have to tell you, but I have to say they frustrate me to no end. It is so frustrating to have Liz Witmer stand every day and not answer the question. Every time she answers, she says: "We're doing it to prevent accidents. We're doing it to help injured workers."

Mr Kormos: Is that true?

Mr Marchese: That's what she says. People believe that because she's so calming.

Mr Kormos: But should they believe her?

Mr Marchese: Can they believe her? How could they? Under there, cold blood runs in her veins. Every now and then you've got to see the blood flow, and if you don't see the blood flow, you've got to think there are amphibians somewhere in this House. You've got to think that. The blood has to flow, otherwise you will think reptilians have taken over this place: cold-blooded, without red blood running through their veins. I want Liz Witmer from time to time to show me that there is red blood that runs through those veins. I need to see that.

I can understand the frustration of the member for Hamilton Centre. The poor guy is so frustrated by the answers from Madame Witmer that he goes crazy each time. I understand that. Who wouldn't go crazy with the answers? The poor guy from Hamilton Centre says, "My God, how do I deal with this minister?" because she's always tranquilizing him, and me too.

So our member for Hamilton Centre, correctly, is vociferous in his style. The member for Niagara Falls, I heard him the other day.

Mr Kormos: Who is that?

Mr Marchese: Bart Maves. He stood up and said he didn't like the tone from the member for Hamilton Centre. He said that. He felt he was too loud and offensive. He did. He was offended for Madame Witmer, because as we all know, she is the perfect example of

propriety in the House. So Bart Maves had to come to her defence against this screaming man who passionately spoke against the evil contained in this bill towards injured workers. But no, Bart wouldn't have it. Bart Maves from Niagara Falls said, "We should discuss this bill reasonably, quietly." They cause great injury to injured workers and he says: "No, no, it's not right for you to scream. It is improper. You should be dealing with the issue intelligently, rationally, quietly."

Imagine that. Imagine if I were an injured worker, having to witness the assault on me by this government, and Bart Maves and Witmer are asking me to be polite as they assault my earning power, as they assault my ability to make a living after having been injured on the job. They want me to be quiet. They want us on this side to be nice, to be quiet, to be gentle, to respect the decorum of the House.

I can't do that. We can't do that on this side. We cannot sit here as these people, these honourable Reform members talk about the unfunded liability, as Mr Hastings from Etobicoke-Rexdale did — I'm glad you're alert.

Mr Hastings: On a point of order, Madam Chair: I've risen on this point of order before. I hate doing it. The member across the way from Fort York has been a member of this House for at least a decade. He ought to know that you deal with the members' riding names, not the surname of the member, except in committee. I believe that's usual. Could you remind him of that?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for that point of order. It is a point of order. I would remind the member for Fort York to refer to members by their riding. I would remind all members, because we all forget from time to time.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I appreciate the ruling you've made. I also appreciate that you were speaking to the member for Welland-Thorold at the time and would indicate to you that I referred to the member by name and by riding. I will desist —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, take your seat. I heard you repeatedly during your speech and was hoping you would remember; you were referring to members in the House by their first names. I would ask you to keep that in mind.

Mr Marchese: I did refer to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. I said it. If you look in the record, I said it. Anyway, he interrupted my flow; he really did. That was his intention. He was talking to another member then. He just heard his name and he turned around.

The honourable member — and I refer to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale — one of the finest Reform-minded members of that particular caucus, said —

Mr Silipo: At least he gets more excited than the Minister of Labour.

Mr Marchese: He gets excited. That's true. He gets highly excited. He was talking about the unfunded liability and said that we don't care and they care. You heard him, Speaker. You were in the chair. And you heard other members from our caucus saying, "Well, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, if you're so interested in the unfunded liability, why do you give the employer a 5% tax assessment cut, which amounts to \$6 billion, and say this does not affect the unfunded liability?"

How does he do that? How does he explain it? Of course it affects the unfunded liability. It's okay when you give employers assistance of this kind, but it's not okay if you help the workers. He's saying there's a crisis in the unfunded liability and in the same breath they gave a 5% cut to the employers, causing a \$6-billion deficit. How does he do that? I'll tell you how they do that: They cut the benefits of injured workers to make up for that cut to their employer friends.

Mr Kormos: Tories don't like workers.

Mr Marchese: Tories like employers; Tories don't like injured workers. It's a simple equation. If I give a \$6-billion cut to the employers, as I say there is an unfunded liability, and then I give a cut to injured workers in terms of what they earn after they get injured, you've got to say, those of you who are watching, that employers are in cahoots with this government and they are against the interests of injured workers. That's my deduction. That's what I conclude. Injured workers will conclude the same, except these fine, honourable members. They help their employer friends.

Look at the title. I want to talk about the title. Pete, look, it's called An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system.

Mr Kormos: It's a lie.

Mr Marchese: Well, they gave a \$6-billion cut to the employers. How do they deal with that? Yet it's in the name of the bill.

Mr Kormos: The title lies.

1750

Mr Marchese: Does the title speak to the truth?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I would ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr Kormos: Chair, I said the title lied. I didn't make reference to any member.

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps I misheard you. In that case I would ask you — you're going down a very dangerous road there — to be careful.

Mr Kormos: It's slippery, Speaker, but I'm holding on.

The Acting Speaker: That will do. Go ahead.

Mr Marchese: "An act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system" — they're destabilizing it by giving employers a \$6-billion cut. How can they on the one hand title it this way, then do the opposite? But it continues. Look, it says, "to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers." How? They're cutting the benefits from 90% of net earnings to 85%. How does that stabilize their condition? But that's what this bill pretends to say.

It goes on. It says, "to promote the prevention of injury and disease." How do they do that? They got rid of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre. They cut that off, I believe. They cut much of what was the Workers' Health and Safety Centre. They gutted the training to health and safety in the province, and there's so much more in this bill that is designed to hurt injured workers, yet it's titled "to promote the prevention of injury."

Mr Kormos: Is that true?

Mr Marchese: Well, as I look at the bill, I read through some of the stuff where they're abolishing the

Occupational Disease Panel, which used to be an independent board, and they're transferring some of those functions back to the WCB, titled differently now. How does that help injured workers?

Mr Kormos: But if the title isn't true, then it must be a —

Mr Marchese: The Speaker will warn us about issues of mendacity in the House. We cannot speak about issues of mendacity or veracity here, because they get nervous.

Mr Kormos: A little prevarication, I suppose.

Mr Marchese: "Prevarication" is another word. Here the government talks about creating an insurance fund, which used to be called an accident fund. Isn't an injury an accident? How does an accident become an insurance fund? It's an accident fund, because workers got injured on the job.

Mr Silipo: Is that like turning unemployment insurance into employment insurance?

Mr Marchese: That's it, like the Liberals federally turning unemployment insurance into employment insurance. It's the same idea.

But it goes on. What else have they done here? The Workers' Compensation Board is no longer going to be called the Workers' Compensation Board; it's going to be called the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. It boggles the mind. I look at the injury that's caused to injured workers each time I raise an issue, and the member for Hamilton Centre covered this thoroughly, and then they talk about a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Why would you call the Workers' Compensation Board a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board? These are issues of mendacity that need to be dealt with.

It was a legitimate Workers' Compensation Board, because we're dealing with workers — not workmen, because we're dealing with workers who are men and women — and we're dealing with compensation because we're paying injured workers for injuries sustained on the job. We pay compensation for that injury. It's not a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; it's a Workers' Compensation Board. That's what we're dealing with.

It's hard to be gentle with these honourable members. It's hard to be silent and quiet and decent with these honourable members as they assault injured workers who through no fault of their own get injured in the workplace. It is hard to conduct oneself with the decorum of Madame Witmer when they assault injured workers. It's too difficult to do.

They're going to abolish occupational chronic stress. We all know what that's about. Speaker, you must have had a lot of injured workers come to your office who have suffered chronic stress as a result of serious injuries. These honourable men and women of the Reform government want to get rid of it so they can help their employer friends. Because as you know, each time an injury happens in the workplace, the assessment of the employer goes up, so they don't want to pay injured workers occupational chronic stress. They're getting rid of it.

Speaker, I have to tell you, I am sick and tired of Madame Witmer's style of presentation —

The Acting Speaker: It's the Minister of Labour.

Mr Marchese: — which makes us all believe that everything is okay and that the injured worker is going to

be protected and that she's going to be dealing with prevention and everybody should go home feeling good.

As I read the bill, it is the worst assault on injured workers, the worst assault on human beings. It isn't just injured workers, it is an assault on human beings who become disabled on the job through no fault of their own, and these people, all of them honourable men and women, have assaulted them in ways that I hope injured workers will fight this government back.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): What we have just witnessed in this chamber is something that is very typical of the New Democratic Party. I realize that philosophically your approach to issues is very different than our approach, I say through the Speaker. But we also have witnessed a tremendous dramatic act. I know that the member for Fort York enjoys drama and theatre and I can see why, because you also enjoy practising it, and that's what we've just experienced.

I can go along with that and I can go along with your viewpoint. I can go along with all the 12 years tomorrow that the member for Lake Nipigon and I have been members in this place. All of those years we've travelled on committees and had the theatrics of people representing the interests of injured workers as though they were the only people who cared about injured workers in this province. I've always felt that it was wrong to exploit people for political purposes. I feel what we have just experienced is that kind of exploitation.

Mr Kormos: Oh, Margaret. I remember when you were over here in tears.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Welland-Thorold, come to order.

Mrs Marland: The final thing I will say to the member for Fort York is you can say whatever you like that is different from us philosophically and politically, but I do take exception to your demeaning the Minister of Labour by your mimicking her poise, her dignity and her class. She is one of the classiest ministers we have ever had in this province, and I think for you to stand in your place and talk about how she speaks and her personal style does not become you and it is not true about her.

The Acting Speaker: Your time has expired. Thank you.

Mr Gerretsen: It was certainly very interesting to watch the theatrics of both the member for Mississauga South and the member for Fort York. I admit that the member for Fort York does have a certain way in which he expresses himself that is very vivid. One can certainly identify with it immediately. But I think the point ought not be lost that he's not the only member in the House who's doing that. Let's face it. We see on a daily basis from the 19 cabinet ministers we have there exactly the same thing. Some of them are good actors and some of them are bad actors. I would think if we took a vote, at least on this side of the House, we would say that most of them are pretty bad actors. Some of them don't even remember their lines all that well, quite frankly.

What we really should be talking about are the injured workers of this province. Let's not forget that the injured workers of this province over the next 17 and 18 years

are going to lose \$15 billion worth of benefits. You can laugh about it, you can dismiss it, but that's money that's being taken away from these people. They are going to be downgraded from receiving 90% of what they were earning to getting 85% of what they were earning. Yet at the same time as that's happening, the employers in this province are going to pay \$6 billion less into the fund.

We all have different ways in which we express this — some of us do it in a very theatrical manner, others do it in a more conventional manner — but that's the bottom line. I think that's what the people of Ontario should understand, that the workers of this province are going to lose as a result of this bill passing.

Mr Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments of the member for Fort York, and I tell you I'm proud of him as a colleague and also as a New Democrat, who, like other New Democrats in this caucus, in this community, across this province, across this country, has marched shoulder to shoulder with injured workers as injured workers have been forced to struggle, decade in and decade out, to protect the modest gains they've acquired for themselves with the assistance of their sisters and brothers in the trade union movement and other women and men in the workforce.

New Democrats stood with injured workers on Monday past, April 28, in front of monuments in communities across this province, as we commemorated the sacrifice paid by workers, the ultimate sacrifice: the loss of life suffered by workers in this province in the past and, sadly, regrettably, tragically, through to the present, along with the plethora of injuries and illnesses that still attack workers in Ontario and across this country on a daily basis.

The member for Fort York has put this eloquently and passionately, and who can fault him for passion when it comes to addressing legislation that puts working women and men and the injured workers of this province under direct attack and mugs them, picks their pockets, snatches their purses, so that this government can grease, can pay off the payola to their corporate boss friends. I say to you, the member for Fort York, Mr Marchese, speaks for all of this caucus and all New Democrats when he addresses the sham of Bill 99 and points out the dishonesty inherent even in its title and the fact that it constitutes a major attack on injured workers, to the shame of this government. I'll tell you, it will attract a challenge that this government has not seen the likes of.

Mr Hastings: I would never agree with the member for Kingston and The Islands in his depiction of the member for Fort York as being an actor. I think he is an extremely capable, passionate, concerned individual for injured workers. But I profoundly and fundamentally disagree with how he approaches this bill and how he depicts the intent and the purpose and a lot of the other stuff that's contained within this bill.

The problem for the opposition parties has always been that they are in a state of self-perpetual denial about the fiscal crisis. There is no fiscal crisis, in their minds. The WCB has a ton of money sitting there that you could just dole out; you could just keep writing cheques. Even the former Premier of this province, in his eloquent book

From Protest to Power, acknowledged that his own New Democrats, particularly in the cabinet, would not face the reality of the fiscal problem, whether it's in the WCB or whether it's on a province-wide basis when you deal with the budget.

While the member for Fort York has a rightful concern and a passion about injured workers, he needs to be reminded that the members on the government side here also have compassion and concern for injured workers. To disagree with that at all, even to acknowledge that you can't discern compassion on all sides, questions and imputes motives, and I'm trying to stay away from that. I think we all need to acknowledge that we need to make some major changes in getting an organization fixed up, which has not been dealing with injured workers in a forthright way, and you know that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York has two minutes.

Mr Marchese: I want to thank the member for Welland-Thorold in particular for talking about the history that we New Democrats have had with injured workers, working side by side with them and trying to address their life concerns after an injury. We have a record of that over long, long years. I don't see any Tories in line with us when we are walking with injured workers. I'm afraid I don't see too many Liberals either, for that matter. But we have had a long history of that.

When the member for Mississauga South talks about my presentation as a dramatic act, you have to put that in the context of our history around injured workers. This is not a drama class. I am not teaching English today, although I've taught English in the past. That's not what I'm doing. Today I was talking about injured workers and my relationship to them and the relationship of injured workers to this bill.

When the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says that they too have compassion and concern, for me it needs to be demonstrable. You need to demonstrate it. When you cut 5% of employers' premiums, equivalent to \$6 billion, does that demonstrate a concern for injured workers? When you cut the net benefits of injured workers from 90% to 85%, are you demonstrating your compassion and concern for injured workers? That, to me, is the test. That's the evidence I use to say that this government is not on the side of injured workers but is on the side of the employers. They make it demonstrable through the actions of this bill; that's what we spoke to. New Democrats will continue to fight this government, and we hope injured workers will continue to fight this government as well.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Monday 5 May 1997

Lundi 5 mai 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 mai 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This past Friday the Health Services Restructuring Commission bolted through Sudbury once again, this time to hand out the final directives on hospital governance. Although they haven't got it right yet, the community understands that it's as good as they're going to get. To that end, the Sisters of St Joseph have decided they're going to drop the lawsuit because they understand local health care is so important. The transition team will soon be set up, but they need the help of the minister. The Minister of Health finally has to take a stand. He finally has to come alive. He can't be dead silent on the issues any more.

Maybe we can ask a few questions of the minister while he ponders whether or not he's going to come alive. Where are the MRI services you promised last week? How much money will you remove from our community when you make your reinvestment announcements? Where is the province's commitment to the Sudbury YMCA Centre for Life project? Everybody else in the community — the feds, the municipal representatives, private people, local citizens — has bought into it. The only one who hasn't is the province. Where is your commitment? Will you ensure that you minimize the number of jobs that are lost in the health care industry in Sudbury?

If you follow the lead of Mike Harris and your fellow minister, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I think the answer to that will be no.

JOE BARANYK

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): It's with a great deal of sadness that I report here in the House this week the passing of Joe Baranyk. Joe, an OPP officer who served the people of Ontario for quite a few years, was awarded numerous awards by the Ontario Provincial Police for the work he had done.

Unfortunately, Joe passed away suddenly last week from an aneurism at the young age of 51. At the funeral on Saturday, I've never seen a community touched as much as they were touched by the passing of Joe Baranyk.

Everybody knew Joe. Joe was involved in absolutely everything in the community from the air cadet leagues to various charitable organizations, working with kids,

working with swimming teams. There was hardly a group in the community in the city of Timmins or the area that had not come in contact with Joe Baranyk over the years. I report to the House that it's with sadness I want to pass on to his widow, Irene, and to the three girls our condolences from the Legislature for his unfortunate passing.

I just would say in closing, seldom in my time here have I felt as deeply the passing of an individual in our community. Everybody is obviously a very important person in our community, but Joe I would consider not only a community-minded person, but also a good friend of mine. I was quite saddened to see that unfortunately Joe was not able to be with us any more. I would like to acknowledge that.

RESCUE MISSION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I recently received a letter from a constituent of mine, Erin Livingston, informing me of a special initiative in my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay. Erin is a grade 8 student at Spruce Glen public school in Huntsville who wrote me on behalf of her class and her teacher, Mrs Susan Hawkins.

I'm proud to inform the Legislature today of an effort launched by these students, their teacher and their school in an attempt to help restore the environment around the world. The grade 8 students at Spruce Glen were the first elementary school in Canada to join Rescue Mission, an international project developed by children to plan the environmental future of the planet.

Rescue Mission is directly affiliated with the United Nations, UNICEF and Peace Child International. One of the goals of this class is to raise public awareness about the environment in the community of Huntsville. They recently were involved in a Kids' Expo at Huntsville Place Mall, where they had the opportunity to speak to members of the community, sell buttons they had made, T-shirts and bookmarks.

Since February, the students have been developing environment projects which they presented at this month's home and school meeting. They are also active in corresponding via the Internet with other schools across Canada and around the world in an attempt to encourage other young people to take an interest in environmental issues.

With the recent celebration of Earth Day, an assembly was organized solely by the grade 8 students to continue their goal of educating others about the environment.

I want to say on behalf of the province how impressed I am by the dedication of these students, which will likely become a lifelong goal.

USER FEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Anyone who listened to Mike Harris in the last provincial election campaign would remember that he promised that "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." That's the so-called Common Sense Revolution. Yet when in power, the Conservative government of Mike Harris has imposed \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and lower-income people who purchase medication through the Ontario drug benefit plan.

This has worried the Ontario senior citizens' organizations in Ontario. They say seniors are being dealt a harsh blow as a result of these user fees on drugs. User fees on drugs will penalize the least healthy and often the poorest in society, for it often discourages people from seeking treatment they need. This will lead to a greater cost in the long run, with an increase in hospitalization rates.

Now he has insulted them even more, because he did not have the courtesy to adjust the \$100 annual fee which they started collecting on July 15 of last year — it's not annual, because this year it covered only nine and a half months — for those who make over \$16,000. So the government of Ontario owes seniors a refund.

It just goes to show you that you can't trust Conservatives when it comes to health care. They have broken their promises on health care. They've said there would be no user fees, and there are now user fees, and their new definition of a year is nine and a half months. Seniors of this province will remember.

CANADA GAMES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The site selection committee for the 2001 Canada Games is engaging in its process now of determining the site. It's going to be one of the three Ontario locations that have made the short list. One of those locations of course is Niagara region. The site selection committee was down in Niagara last Wednesday as they toured the facilities and the remarkable plethora of venues that are available for these games in Niagara.

They made note, I'm sure, of the strong francophone community in Niagara, which will enable Niagara to meet the minimum requirement of 250 francophone volunteers handily.

People from across the region were out in full force greeting this site selection committee. I was with folks from Welland at the Welland baseball stadium on Wednesday evening as thousands of Wellanders came out, accompanied by Guides and Scouts. Members of the community who are eager to participate in these games, eager to host them, should pay tribute to Rob Neill, who is the chair of the bid committee in Niagara and who showed exceptional energy and enthusiasm on behalf of Niagarans as he has prepared Niagara to undertake the responsibility for hosting these games.

I have every confidence that Niagara is undoubtedly the number one location, and I urge you, Speaker, and members of this assembly to join with me in encouraging the selection of regional Niagara, with all of its amenities, the vineyards and fruit lands, the historical sites and natural sites, as the location for these games.

1340

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Today is the beginning of Education Week in Ontario. Under the theme of "Better Education for a Brighter Future," parents, teachers and students in communities across this province will celebrate their achievements and aspirations for the future. I would like to invite the members of the House to join me in congratulating them for their accomplishments.

We firmly believe that a quality education is a passport to opportunity for the individual student growing up in a rapidly changing world. It is a vital factor in determining how well we as a society will succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive global economy.

We are moving ahead with reforms that will improve student performance and the accountability of the education system.

Ontario grade 3 students have just completed the first province-wide test in reading, writing and mathematics. It has been a learning experience for all of us in the education system. After all, it was the most ambitious test ever undertaken in this province.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the teachers, principals and students involved in the grade 3 testing. The tests are now being marked, and results will be sent home to students and parents in June. Teachers will also receive feedback to ensure the test results lead to program improvements.

Furthermore, as teachers get ready to administer grade 6 tests, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Education Quality and Accountability Office, which is committed to providing the government with reliable data and parents with useful information on their children's performance.

In addition, we are also moving to provide our teachers with high-quality training —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much.

STUDENT CONFERENCE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): On Friday evening I had the opportunity to spend the evening in Ridgeway with 150 grade 10 students who were part of the Hugh O'Brien Youth Foundation Conference for Youth. This collection of 150 students are leaders and were selected as such to participate in a weekend-long conference that bolsters these young people of Ontario.

We participated in little sessions with groups of these grade 10 students. Here are some of the questions they posed to me:

"What about me?" They were so concerned about provincial cutbacks and specifically how they relate to young people.

They said: "What about the job market? Where do I fit in in the future? Is anyone looking out for me?" Unfortunately, there was very little information I could pass on that this government has its young people as any part of its priority at all.

They said: "What about curriculum reform? Who's looking out for us? What are we missing in terms of

information? What happens in that one year when those two classes will be graduating from secondary school and they both hit the job market and/or post-secondary education in that same year? What about those kids? What's going to happen to them? Are the guidelines going to be more stringent? Will there be jobs for them?"

These are the kinds of questions that young people today need an answer to.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Last week I attended several meetings as the critic for housing and municipal affairs. I was at one meeting at Willowglen Co-op. I believe that's in the riding of York East. I attended another meeting at Greenbrae Residents Association; it was a public housing meeting. One of the things that came out of that discussion of course is that they're concerned. A common concern both of co-op members and people living in public housing is concern about what's going to happen to their homes.

There was concern in particular at the Greenbrae Residents Association, the riding which the Minister of Culture is in, Scarborough-Ellesmere. I know she was invited but couldn't make it, and I understand the federal Liberal member of that riding couldn't make it. The concern of those residents is that the federal Liberal government is about to abandon their \$2-billion responsibility for co-ops and social housing and is about to give it to this government, which wants to download their whole housing responsibility down to the municipal sector. They have concerns and they want to plead with the federal Liberal government not to give up the responsibility for housing and give it away to a government that doesn't want any responsibility for housing. They're seriously concerned about what's going to happen to their future, but to their homes in particular, because we're talking about low-income people. I hope the government is going to listen to them, because I'm worried too.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre to recognize this week as Mental Health Week.

Mental health programs are a priority for our government, and that is why our government has allocated \$23.5 million for the community investment fund. This fund is our government's commitment to ensuring that people with mental illness receive the care they need in their communities.

The community investment fund is an investment in community services and supports for people with serious mental illness. Priority services include case management, including supports for housing, crisis response and consumer/survivor and family initiatives.

The community investment fund represents \$20 million in base funding and \$3.5 million in one-time funding. Currently our government spends \$1.2 billion annually on mental health services, including inpatient, community and physician services. Funding for mental health services in Ontario has been fully protected.

Our government has protected program funding for the community investment fund and all mental health services, and any administrative efficiencies that can be found within mental health services will be reinvested into other direct mental health services. This is part of our government's continuing commitment to put patients first. To date, 50 of the 104 programs allocated under the community investment fund are already up and running.

I want to ask each of the members to join me today in recognizing Mental Health Week and to commend the efforts of the numerous volunteers who will be out in the communities volunteering their time —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the Premier. Over the next few days we're going to hear a few Tory myths come from the mouths of the Premier and the finance minister. We're going to hear stories about what a good job this government is doing and how well Ontarians are doing.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Mr Cordiano: It's a myth. Perhaps the backbenchers of this government would like to applaud the fact that this government has cut \$145 million to junior kindergarten or that this government has cut another \$150 million to adult education. Why don't you applaud that? Why don't you applaud those kinds of stories? Tell us about how you cut \$400 million from colleges and universities and how our per-pupil funding levels are among the lowest — and I repeat, the lowest — in North America. Why don't you applaud that?

Premier, when will you admit that all you're concerned about is the bottom line and that you're prepared to sacrifice our children's education in order to meet your bottom line?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): In spite of the fact of the disastrous fiscal mess that we inherited after 10 years of Liberal and NDP government, in spite of the fact of \$2 billion in cuts to social spending from your federal cousins, now somehow or other seeking re-election on those cuts, we have continued to provide virtually the highest per-capita funding in the world in almost every area, including children, including education, including health care.

If you want to get into some of the statistics, we spend on child care 10 times what your Liberal cousin does in New Brunswick; we spend three times what the NDP Premier does in Saskatchewan, per capita, per person, per child. Here is a government that in spite of the mess we inherited has probably shown more compassion and more desire to support children and the needy than any other government in the history of Canada.

1350

Mr Cordiano: The Premier can throw around all the myths he wants and all the phoney figures he wants but

you're not going to be able to hide from the reality, and people see that reality.

Let's talk about your record on jobs. In the last seven months Ontario lost 11,000 jobs, while the rest of Canada gained 88,000 jobs. You said you would create 145,000 jobs a year in your Common Sense Revolution. Almost two years into your mandate you're 147,000 jobs behind.

The people being hit the hardest are youth, with an unemployment rate of almost 20%. Shame on you. The people being hit over and over again are those people who are looking for jobs but can't find one. Why don't you tell young people what a great job you're doing in this province, Premier? They see right through you. They see that they are looking for jobs but they can't find one.

Premier, you have created a huge human deficit in our province. When are you personally going to take responsibility for that huge human deficit?

Hon Mr Harris: The job figures you quote are about as mythical and wrong as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt's. This province is leading Canada by any measure in private sector job creation: acknowledged by every other province, much to their chagrin, acknowledged by the federal government, acknowledged by StatsCan, acknowledged by every measure. Is it good enough? No, it is not good enough.

However, let me give you this as a statistic that is the fact: There are more people employed in Ontario today than in its entire history. Is that good enough? No. Why is the unemployment rate still so high? Because more people are coming to Ontario now. More people are entering the workforce. Instead of like the last 10 years when they came here for welfare, now they're coming for jobs. Let's celebrate that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Heckling is out of order, I would remind the members for Dovercourt, Sudbury, Windsor-Sandwich and probably Lake Nipigon too.

Mr Cordiano: The sad reality is that there are literally thousands of people looking for jobs and they can't find one. How can you tell the one in five children in Ontario living in poverty that everything is okay in this province?

Ontarians are likely to believe that as much as they believe that your tax cut hasn't affected health care, Premier. I'm not just talking about the 22 hospitals you have slated for closure; I'm talking about the fact that people are dying unattended in hallways in our hospitals because your cuts are forcing the layoff of more than 15,000 nurses. I'm talking about the \$225 million in user fees for drugs you have forced on seniors and the disabled.

Premier, this is your record, a record that leaves a huge human deficit. When will you admit that your entire approach to governing is wrong? When will you admit that you're willing to sacrifice thousands of people to get to the bottom line? When will you admit that?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to acknowledge one thing that we do believe is very important that your government didn't and the NDP didn't: The bottom line is important. If you are going to pass on to our children and their children and their grandchildren balanced books instead of spending today and asking them to pay for it tomorrow, as is your approach, then the bottom line is important to this government. I want you to know that.

Second, I want to tell you this: In spite of the deficits you passed on to us, in spite of your federal Liberal cousins in Ottawa, in spite of all those situations, here is a government spending more on health care than in this province's record, far more than we campaigned and committed to do, because we've taken this approach, that if there is a need for the disadvantaged, if there is a need for children, if there is a need for health care, if there is a need for the disabled and the elderly, we put that first, and those are the programs that we're funding first.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is for the Minister of Health. Following upon the Premier's last response, my question very much concerns putting the needs of patients first in Ontario.

Minister, 18 months ago you announced on behalf of your government that there would be a significant expansion of kidney dialysis programs in eastern Ontario, that programs would be expanded in Ottawa and Renfrew and Belleville and a new program would start in Cornwall. That was much applauded.

Eighteen months later there is no progress. The lineups are even longer than they were a year ago. The question that kidney dialysis patients from Renfrew county to west Hastings want me to ask you today is, when are you going to do something to make good on your 18-months-ago promise that kidney dialysis programs will be expanded in our part of eastern Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The question is a little unfair, given that 18 months ago the honourable member in this House brought into question the RFP, request for proposal, tendering process for eastern Ontario. As a result of his questions in the House we now have legal action before the government and I can't comment further on that.

However, I can say that about 22 new clinics are up and running around the province today and we're just waiting to expand. The money has already been announced, you're right, well over a year ago. It's sitting there, waiting to expand services in eastern Ontario, but we are before the courts with respect to that particular tender.

Mr Conway: The minister is right. A year ago I brought to this House New York Times articles about National Medical Care of Boston, a really wonderful bunch of bad actors who were in great controversy in the United States for what they were doing in the kidney dialysis business. You're bloody right that Lyn McLeod and Sean Conway brought that to the attention of the minister.

I understand that it's now at court, but the basic question remains. I represent people who have to, three times a week from the Upper Ottawa Valley, drive over six hours for a five-hour kidney dialysis treatment in Ottawa, winter and summer. You promised that the situation would change not just in Renfrew but in Cornwall, in Belleville, in Kingston and in Ottawa. You have not made good on that promise.

What I want to know is, quite apart from the court case that arose from your botched privatization scheme,

Minister, what are you going to say to the kidney dialysis patients who are on ever-expanding waiting lists throughout eastern Ontario? When are they going to get off those waiting lists and get to the Renfrew, Cornwall and Belleville sites for the care you promised?

Hon Mr Wilson: There are times in government when you're not free perhaps to shed all the light on a particular issue. The honourable member knows that it was a request for a proposal that went out to the hospitals and to the private sector and that across the province, with the exception of eastern Ontario because of the court case, those tenders were awarded. Most of them went to hospitals, highest quality, best price, and it was considered a real success.

I understand this issue fully. I spent many years in opposition ensuring that the previous government would begin to move on this and they didn't. We have moved everywhere in the province but eastern Ontario because the matter is before the courts. As soon as the courts have dealt with that, we will move forward.

Mr Conway: Jim Wilson is now the Minister of Health. He has some responsibilities.

I might add that the Renfrew and Belleville proposals had nothing to do with Dr Posen and the National Medical scheme that got you into trouble and got you into court, and that the people at the Renfrew Victoria Hospital have made a specific proposal to you in recent weeks on how they might undertake some emergency measures to reduce their waiting lists so these good people who have to travel all this distance three times a week might be cared for. To date, they've got nothing but the back of your hand.

I repeat, Minister, what are you going to do to now relieve the pressure that has been building? These waiting lists in Cornwall and Renfrew and Belleville grow. You know and I know that the demand for kidney dialysis is growing at an annual rate of 10%. What measures are you going to take to provide the service you promised 18 months ago to the people of urban and rural eastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: We did announce fairly recently an expansion of current services, and some of those dollars went to eastern Ontario to look after patients there. I know there's tremendous demand. Again, I cannot comment on the court case, other than to say that when it's solved, we look forward to, as we announced, expanding so there'll be more sites available throughout eastern Ontario. We're doing our best right now, within the confines directed by the court, to expand the existing services.

1400

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'd like to direct my question to the Premier, and it continues on this theme of broken promises. In your answers earlier, we heard a lot of superlatives: the best in the history of the country, the best in the history of Ontario. I suspect that tomorrow we'll hear you say you're going to be spending more on health care than any other government in the history of Ontario has ever spent.

Let me quote these words back to you, from last year's budget, the finance minister: "This year we will spend \$600 million on child care — the highest...in...Ontario's history."

Premier, we know that's another broken promise. We know that you raised expectations and didn't come through. This morning, your finance minister was quoted as saying that broken promise is one of his "biggest disappointments." I can tell you, there are a lot of parents and children out there who are pretty disappointed as well: children and families who are on waiting lists, who face their centres being closed, where subsidies have been done away with because of your downloading to municipalities. Your finance minister said he was sorry. Premier, what do you say to the parents and children of Ontario who are waiting for child care services?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Sorry.

Ms Lankin: I'm glad to hear that's a "sorry" to those people. What I want to know is, when is there going to be some action? That promise of \$40 million for last year's budget and for every year for the next five years was the largest single commitment you made for spending on children. You haven't come through. In fact, you not only didn't come through on that, but over 9,000 spaces have disappeared; the subsidies at the municipal levels are gone, so the province isn't picking up their share; and you've cut over \$50 million in capital funding for child care centres.

You're going to be a government that has spent less than other governments in the history of Ontario. Would you at least admit to that? When we see the actual figures, we will see that your government has spent less on child care than previous governments in the history of Ontario. Please admit that.

Hon Mr Harris: That is totally false and incorrect, along with most of the allegations you make. Nobody regrets more than the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Finance and I that we had not been able to get uptake on the child care money that was there and was there right up until the end of the year.

I want to say that with in-fighting from all those who have been involved in the child care group, we have not been able to get that money out — not for bureaucracy, not for the failed programs that you were on, not for wasting the money in how many of these companies you can put out of business, but to actually help children. Nobody regrets that more than we do. I can tell you, if you're in the House tomorrow, we'll have it fixed.

Ms Lankin: I have never seen a Premier of this province who stands up and states anything that comes into his mind, even when there's no factual basis to it. Premier, you are dead wrong. That \$40 million didn't remain unspent because there was no takeup. People are crying in communities across this province for additional spaces. You put a freeze on those dollars; your government never released those dollars. Please correct your own statements in this House.

Time and time again I have raised the example of four child care centres in Toronto schools that are about to go out of business altogether because your government won't fund the capital reconstruction as those schools are being redesigned, renovated or rebuilt.

They've made some progress. From the city of Toronto and Metro, which would not normally ever have funded this, they've got a commitment of \$800,000-plus. All they need now is \$390,000 and you can save 214 child care spaces in this city. Would you tell me, with \$40 million left unspent — tomorrow it'll be \$80 million left unspent — are you going to lose those 214 spaces in four centres for the want of \$400,000? Will you commit to that today?

Hon Mr Harris: What we are committed to doing is addressing the failed, disastrous, money-wasting policies your government brought into place that spent more and more money and did not help one single child find new child care. That has been the problem. We are committed to correct that, and if you're here in the House tomorrow when the budget is read, you will see that in fact we have come up with a solution to carry on spending 50 times more than Quebec in child care, three times more than Saskatchewan in child care, 1000% more than Liberal New Brunswick, all on a per capita basis. But I can tell you this: If you're waiting for us to throw the money away the way you did, you don't want to be here tomorrow.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Beaches-Woodbine, Welland-Thorold and Fort York, please come to order. Heckling is out of order. The member for Lake Nipigon also.

New question; the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. It's the first time I've heard investing money in children described as throwing it away, the first time I've ever heard it put that way.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, about health care, it's clear your policy towards our hospitals is one of cutting them, not one of better health care. You've taken \$800 million out of hospital budgets so far, and that has meant that hospitals have had to lay off thousands of nurses and other health care workers and they've had to reduce patient care.

Even one of your advisers, Dr David Naylor, in a recent speech to the Canadian Club, sent you a message. He said, "Don't cut hospital budgets a further \$500 million, because patient care will really have to be sacrificed." Premier, will you commit today that next year, in the coming year, you will not cut a further \$500 million out of hospital budgets and make even further cuts to patient care across this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think all members are aware that there will be a budget, a document for the year, and it will be read tomorrow. The Minister of Finance will read it, and we will have to await that to get the details of spending and funding commitments. But let me assure you of this: At no time in our first budget, in our first year in office, in our second year in office or as long as we are in office will we cut one cent out of any budget if we think it will affect patient care.

Mr Hampton: We have the Premier's words and then we have the reality out there. We have the reality of

young children who can't get cancer care because the hospital where they're supposed to receive it doesn't have enough nurses on duty that day to provide it. We have elderly patients dying in hallways because hospitals don't have enough nurses and other health care workers to provide the staffing they need.

Premier, you need to see the reality. The fact of the matter is that your government has severely cut patient care. Virtually every one across this province knows it. You can announce and reannounce different programs, but the fact of the matter is that patient care has been affected, is being affected.

What people want to know is, what is your government going to do? The Minister of Finance was able to organize a press conference at the top of the CN Tower. What are you going to do about the \$800 million you've taken out of hospital budgets so far, the \$500 million you're going to take next year, and all the negative effects that has had on patient care? What are you going to do to fix that?

Hon Mr Harris: The Minister of Health, I'm sure, can answer.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member is in error once again. We have seen, in savings from hospitals to date, about \$325 million, and I have personally announced \$950 million worth of re-investments in the health care system, over two and a half times more than we've seen in savings to date. We have never said that restructuring would save money. What we said it would do is get rid of the waste, the duplication, the excessive administrative costs. Every dollar and more has gone back into the health care system.

The honourable member again is wrong, and David Naylor said this in his speech: "We've seen no evidence at all of cuts in patient services or the quality of care that hospitals and other delivery agencies are delivering to the people of Ontario." I'd ask the honourable member to keep to the facts. The facts are not as he has espoused.

Mr Hampton: I'll read from Dr Naylor's speech, because Dr Naylor is very specific. He says: "I would like to take this chance to call publicly on the minister and the Premier to take two key steps that will help stabilize our hospital sector in this period of unprecedented restructuring. First, cancel the across-the-board cut planned for 1998. With a growing aging population, with pressures of new technologies, it won't work. Second, make a public announcement confirming that contingency funds are available for this year." In other words, he says the problem is so urgent, that patient care is being affected so badly, that not only should you not make a \$500-million cut next year, but you should provide contingency funds for this year.

Minister, I suspect you need to learn the facts and I suggest you do that. Dr Naylor is saying patient care is already being affected. A further \$500-million cut to hospital budgets will affect it even worse. What are you going to do about it?

1410

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, because I know Dr Naylor would not want this to stand on the record of this Parliament, he did not say that patient care is being adversely affected. What he did say, and it's very consistent with

what the Ontario Hospital Association has said and what I have said and government members have said for the past months, is: We're looking very carefully at the third year of the savings that we've asked of hospitals, because, as the Premier said, the policy is not a drive to save money; the policy is to get rid of the waste, duplication and inefficiency in the system.

Restructuring costs money up front, but at the end of the day we'll have more services for more patients. We are motivated by the huge number of seniors that will come on stream in the next two years, requiring ever-increasing health care in this province, and the growing population. That is our motivation for restructuring, to get the system fixed so we can serve more patients at modern hospitals with the newest technologies and the newest drug therapies.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, the Premier earlier in the House — this is on personal privilege — indicated that I used erroneous figures. This is not the first time he has tried this: he did it on February 24, and the next day I sent the Premier a letter demanding that he produce the evidence. I find that I'm not going to stand for his bully tactics. He may be able to get away with it in caucus. He may be able to use his power somewhere else —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't see that as a point of privilege, to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

New question. Official opposition, member for York South.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I also have a question for the Premier. Mr Premier, I'd like to talk to you about Scott Charland. I'd like to talk to you about Mr Charland because you received a letter from his parish priest, and in it the parish priest tells you that Mr Charland, 38 years old, was diagnosed as suffering from angina. He was referred to hospital for an angiogram. On the day of the test, he and his family were called and the test was cancelled. It was cancelled due to the lack of beds at the Ottawa Heart Institute. They rescheduled the angiogram and when they did that, the day of the test he was cancelled again. It was scheduled for April 17, and Mr Charland died on April 13. He was pronounced dead on his arrival at hospital.

Mr Premier, you have said in this House already today that not one cent that would cut into patient care would go. In fact you have cut hospitals \$800 million. Will you do the right thing? Will you respect what happened to Mr Charland and unfortunately to others across the province? Will you cancel the second year of cuts in your budget tomorrow?

Hon Mr Harris: First, nobody is suggesting that the health care system is perfect, that this government is perfect or that the science of medicine at any time, given any amount of money, is ever perfect. Second, this government, as all members would, as all of those involved in the community would, obviously regret any situation, for whatever reason, that caused problems to any individual in the health care system. Let me state that on behalf of any who may have been involved in that. Third, the budget will be delivered tomorrow.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Premier, tomorrow people will be looking for the sincerity in your statement. What this Anglican priest says to you is that the treatment required was not available due to your cuts in health services. What this concerned family and their parish priest say to you is that you and your ministers show a cavalier disregard in what you propose and in how what you propose affects the lives of ordinary people.

Mr Premier, you are moving people out of beds in hospitals quicker and sicker to empty them, to save money, and you've saved \$800 million. Your minister travels the province making empty promises he doesn't live up to in terms of reinvestments. Tomorrow, Premier, we're looking for you to live up to this.

I want to ask you the question that this parish priest is asking you, and these are his words: "To please explain to Scott Charland's wife, Elvlea, and their two children what your concern for the bottom line is doing to make their lives more livable without a husband and a father."

Hon Mr Harris: Let me assure you and the minister and the family that we have not cut a cent from health care. We have dramatically increased funding to health care. We have increased funding to cardiac care.

Let me also say that we are accepting the very best advice we can get from the best health care professionals and the best managers of health care that we can find anywhere in Canada as to how those dollars that we are increasing should be allocated, the best medical and the best managerial advice in health care as to how our increasing commitment to health care can be managed. That, I think, is the prudent and the best thing we can do as a government.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health and member for York South, come to order.

Mr Marchese: Minister, your son of mega-week announcement is but a slight improvement on the original. You are still dumping \$666 million in costs on to the municipalities by taking away their unconditional grants, and the costs of social housing and family benefits mean that property taxpayers can expect taxes to go up. Even your friends at the Toronto board of trade call the impact of your new announcement on Metro a time bomb. Will you deny that you are dumping \$347 million on to the homeowners and tenants in Metropolitan Toronto?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): What this government did was listen to the concerns of municipalities. We have met with AMO. We had negotiations with AMO on what was the best way to separate the delivery of services between the municipalities and the province. AMO came back with a proposal a few weeks ago that indicated a means and way of separating those services and splitting the costs that was acceptable to them. That was a proposal put forward by the municipalities. The municipalities are convinced that this is the best approach. We concurred with that and changed our proposal to accept theirs.

Mr Marchese: I asked a question on whether or not the minister will deny that he is dumping \$347 million on to the homeowner and the tenant of Metropolitan Toronto, and he talks to me about AMO. I didn't ask him anything about AMO and what they said. It's a different question. Ministers have to begin to answer our questions.

Minister, you are reducing income taxes and increasing property taxes to the tune of \$666 million. You are reducing the tax that is based on ability to pay and increasing the tax that hits the poor and the middle class the hardest. That is so consistent with your government's record of whacking homeowners and tenants who can least afford it. Think of the elderly couples, not just in my riding but in Metro and beyond, who own their homes but because of your download will have to pay more in property taxes with the miserly pensions that they get.

Why should that elderly couple pay for your tax cut for the wealthiest citizens of Ontario who will benefit from that tax cut? Why?

Hon Mr Leach: They always neglect to mention the amount of money that's coming off as a result of 50% of the cost of education coming off the property tax. I also point out to the member that in the bill that's being put forward, Bill 106, there was language in that bill that allowed for the municipalities to provide relief to seniors and low-income families that are affected as a result of tax shifts from the assessment standpoint. I can assure this House that this government is quite aware and quite knowledgeable about what effect our legislation is going to have on seniors and low-income families, and I can assure you that there is language in that legislation to make sure they're protected.

1420

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Minister, the annual hunt for summer jobs for students is well under way in Halton and province-wide. Thousands of students are looking for opportunities to gain some experience and earn some income. What is your ministry doing to help these students find summer work?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the member for Halton Centre, I'm very pleased to tell him that this government is indeed very concerned about jobs for students in the summer. There is good news for students this summer, and I would like to elaborate on that if I could.

There will be nearly 3,000 summer jobs available through my ministry, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The Niagara Parks Commission will be offering 500 positions.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Obviously, they don't like to hear the good news.

Ontario Place Corp is offering 490 jobs and some other locations where new jobs will be available are in Huronia

historical parks, Old Fort William and the St Lawrence Parks Commission.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would caution the member for Sault Ste Marie to come to order.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Three more warnings.

The Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie, come to order. I warn the member for Sault Ste Marie to come to order. I'll also take this great opportunity to ask the member for Ottawa-Rideau to come to order as well. Supplementary.

Mr Young: Minister, will there be opportunities for students who wish to start their own small business?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm very happy to report that there will be up to \$3,000 available for those students —

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The scary part, Speaker, is that he used to work on Bay Street.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, I can stand here and everyone can heckle and I'll wait, but you're not even in your seat and that's way out of order. I would ask either that you go back to your seat or stop heckling, or better yet, both. Minister.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Before I was interrupted, may I say that I would not be surprised that the students in Ontario would be very upset to hear the opposition laughing about the good news about summer jobs for them.

I'm happy to say that the Royal Bank, in partnership with my ministry, is to arrange key funding for student venture programs. Up to \$3,000 will be available for enterprising students who wish to run their own businesses as independents this summer. Students from 15 to 29 years of age who will be returning full-time to university or school —

Interjections.

The Speaker: We'll just keep waiting until we get this question in. Minister.

Hon Mr Saunderson: As I was saying, those students between 15 and 29 years of age who will be returning to university or school on a full-time basis in the fall will be eligible for these assistance programs by the Royal Bank and our ministry. I think what all of this shows is that this government is determined to boost summer jobs and to help the job market for students. All Ontario students who are willing to work will certainly get this assistance, and we're very pleased to make this announcement.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Premier. All property taxpayers listened with great interest to the announcement that was made last week with respect to the downloading and also with respect to the news release that you put out entitled *Who Does What: A New Partnership for Taxpayers*.

As we have stated and as municipalities have been telling you throughout the last two or three months, your last plan called for a downloading of an extra \$1 billion to the local taxpayers. The overriding principle that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario put in its proposal to you — and I'll quote it — is that "The

proposal is to be fiscally neutral between the provincial and local governments."

Premier, will you guarantee to the taxpayers of this province that a new proposal will not result in any increase in local property taxes?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me assure you of a couple of things. Given that the uploading the province took on is \$3 million more than we've asked municipalities to take on, there's absolutely no reason, given that we have uploaded \$3 million to ourselves, save and except the possibility that they elect Liberal and NDP spenders, why any of them as a result of that need to increase taxes.

Second, given that we accepted the proposal put forward by municipalities with a couple of very minor exceptions, I would think the municipalities would be saying, and I think a number of them are: "Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity for the dialogue, something we never had with previous governments to this extent."

Mr Gerretsen: The municipalities certainly aren't thanking you for anything in this regard. If anything, they're trying to make a good deal out of a very bad situation.

The initial figures are coming in. In the city of Kingston, \$28 million would have been added on in the last proposal; \$15 million will be added on to the local property taxpayers as a result of the latest proposal. The city of Hamilton: \$88 million. According to the calculations out there, we expect somewhere between \$500 million and \$600 million will be downloaded by your government to the local property taxpayers.

Will you guarantee the local property taxpayers that they will not be paying any more as a result of these new funding arrangements?

Hon Mr Harris: I can assure you, as a result of Who Does What, that the figures show an uploading of \$3 million on to the province as part of those discussions.

Let me tell you something else that they're not talking about very much, which I would hope you would want to take back to them. There was one proposal they asked us to do that we did not accept. That proposal was for the province of Ontario to take another \$250 million, or 5%, for education. We said, "No. Thank you very much, but we think you need it more than we do," and we left \$250 million more in tax capacity for the local municipal governments than they even asked us to do.

1430

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. I would like to return to the question of Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. As you know, last year I raised a number of questions with you and asked you to release reports so that the public and parents could have a sense of what was going on in your ministry and that their children who are incarcerated are safe.

It's my understanding that nine managers at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre were fired last Friday for not cooperating with the ministry's internal investigation. This disciplinary action is related to the allegations that

young offenders were beaten and mistreated while in the care of your ministry. It's also our understanding, but we've been unable at this point in time to get confirmation, that your internal investigation was finished about a month ago.

It's been over a year since this disturbing incident took place, and people have been kept in the dark. I've asked you before for a commitment for those reports to be released. You gave me a commitment that the ministry investigation report would be released. We understand it's completed. Would you please give me a commitment today that you will release that report?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I can confirm that the report is complete. I received it about two and a half weeks ago, I think, roughly. I've received a legal opinion from the Ministry of the Attorney General that the release might prejudice ongoing court cases or police investigations and I have accepted that advice.

Ms Lankin: Minister, every time we ask you to be open with the public of Ontario, you come up with another excuse about why you're going to continue to keep them in the dark. These were really serious allegations, very serious events that took place at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. Would you confirm for us what action has been taken? Would you confirm for us the disciplinary actions that have been taken? Have nine managers been fired? Would you tell us what steps have been taken inside the institution to ensure the safety of children?

There was another report we asked for, the report of the child advocate, and you never made that public either. At this point in time it's not good enough to keep putting it off and saying: "There are other processes. It will jeopardize this," or "It will jeopardize that." What about the kids who have been in jeopardy in your ministry? We have a right to be assured that those kids are being taken care of. Will you release the child advocate's report to us? Will you confirm what actions have been taken in reaction to your internal ministry investigation?

Hon Mr Runciman: I've said from the outset with respect to this situation that I would release what I can when I can. I have to rely on the advice I'm receiving with respect to release dates and the amount of material and information that can be released.

With respect to disciplinary action, yes, some disciplinary action has been taken. I do not get involved in the details of those disciplinary moves. They are taken by the deputy minister's office, and that's the correct way in which they should be dealt with.

With respect to the young offenders' system, there has been a host of initiatives that we have undertaken, which we've made public, with respect to the system: the CO-Start training program; I hope to make an announcement within the next few weeks with respect to a dedicated facility for young offenders for the first time in this province, a dedicated institution to house young offenders; the Inkster report, which took a look at management within the corrections system. We're now conducting a review of the culture within the corrections system. I think we've moved on a wide range of fronts to deal with systemic problems within the corrections system.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, Ontario's heritage is important to all Ontarians in this great province, but perhaps nowhere more so than in agriculture and food.

My riding of Halton North is home to the Ontario Agricultural Museum. I understand an agreement has been signed with a not-for-profit corporation to operate and manage the Ontario Agricultural Museum. Can you tell the members of the Legislature more about this good-news story?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Halton North for his question. Yes, the Country Heritage Experience Inc group has formed a not-for-profit corporation. They will be operating the agricultural museum. The board of directors consists of representatives of all sectors of the agrifood industry, and I understand the corporation has developed a five-year plan that will keep the museum open and will indeed allow the visitors, the students who regularly visit the museum, to continue to learn about our agricultural heritage and its roots. So I'm very pleased that we have a private sector non-profit corporation running our agricultural museum.

Mr Chudleigh: That's indeed good news for the residents and constituents of Halton North. The Ontario Agricultural Museum is set to open its doors on May 17 and will continue to be open five days a week right through to Thanksgiving. Can you describe how this showcase of Ontario's agricultural heritage will benefit from private sector involvement?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I'd be pleased just to remind my colleagues that the agricultural museum is situated at Milton just off the 401, well indicated. We anticipate some 70,000 visitors, including students and city people who know very little about agriculture and the roots of agriculture in this province and the importance of agriculture in this province, the second most important industry in the province. The museum is revitalized, not just privatized. It's anticipated by the board that they will not only break even but indeed will show a profit, and that is good news for all of Ontario agriculture.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Bill 106 amends the Assessment Act by adding the following definition: "'Current value' means, in relation to land, the amount of money the fee simple, if unencumbered, would realize if sold at arm's length by a willing seller to a willing buyer."

Minister, I have been a real estate professional, I have taught the course, and I can tell you that this definition is verbatim what the definition is for market value. Yet at our committee hearings, an official from the Ministry of Finance said there is a difference. I would ask you if you could explain to the House the difference between this definition of current value and that accepted by lawyers and by real estate professionals of what market value is.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Obviously both systems are value-based, and we've always stated that. It's a matter of how the systems are implemented. The 1992 version of market value assessment that was introduced by Metro and rejected by the NDP government had certain features which made it completely unpalatable to the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto, including myself. It called for assessments every four years; there are opportunities for lots of spikes — a totally volatile situation.

The assessment system we're proposing calls for the assessment to be done on an annual basis with a three-year rolling average, which takes all the volatility out of the system. This is a system that will work well for Metropolitan Toronto. We've also put in aspects to protect seniors and the disabled and also to phase it in over eight years. There are tremendous differences between —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Kwinter: We are talking about legislation; we are talking about the law. I have in my hand the Assessment Act of 1980, and it provides under section 14, "Market value of the parcel of land." This was in 1980, when market value assessment was not an issue, yet in the committee those particular definitions were changed without reference to anything else. Everywhere where it said "market value" there was put in "current value," which indicates that all you're doing is playing with words. If you're going to change the description of "market value" in the act to "current value" without any definition other than the one that is exactly the same as market value, you are really deceiving the public and the professionals who are in the field.

During the campaign of 1995, you issued and you said to homeowners in Cabbagetown, Moore Park and Rosedale, "My party and I will never" — underlined — "support the imposition of MVA," market value assessment, "in Metro Toronto," signed by Al Leach. Your colleague Isabel Bassett, underlined: "The policy of the PC Party has always been that we will never impose market value assessment on Toronto. We remain firm in that position." Yet this 106 substitutes the words "market value" for "current value." It is exactly the same. Again, I challenge you as I challenge —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Wilson Heights. Minister?

Interjection: It gets him off the hook, that's all it does.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): We want to hear his answer.

The Speaker: Well, there's something you can do to facilitate that. Minister?

Hon Mr Leach: I'm glad the member pointed that out, because I did oppose the proposed market value assessment that was introduced by Metro in 1992. It was a terrible system. It would have had devastating effects on properties in Metropolitan Toronto.

As a result, we developed a new system, the Ontario fair assessment system, which takes all the volatility out of the system that was proposed before. It's going to be reassessed every year, not every four years. It's going to

have a three-year rolling average. There is going to be a phase-in period, not just rammed down their throats in one year, as was proposed before. There is legislated protection for seniors; there is legislated protection for low-income families. There is absolutely no comparison to the system that was proposed before. The system we're introducing is fair.

1440

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the minister for privatization. We know that when the minister's plans for privatization appeared to be floundering, he went to the firm of Coopers and Lybrand and hired, at almost a quarter of a million dollars a year, Mr Paul Currie from that company to get privatization moving again.

Apparently Mr Currie, before he was hired and still under the employ of Coopers and Lybrand, shared information he had with his superiors at Coopers and Lybrand. His superior, Mr Bolton, then went and had a meeting with the minister and asked to be reassured — this comes from a memo written by Mr Bolton himself — that Coopers and Lybrand would not be kicked off the gravy train just because Mr Currie was going to work for the minister at a quarter of a million dollars a year.

Would the minister tell us if he thinks that's appropriate behaviour for him to engage in when there was inside information given to one firm as to what was going to be privatized?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I am not exactly sure what the member opposite is talking about. I suspect he's referring to a memo that was referred to this House in a question last week that would seem to have indicated that I had discussion with Mr Bolton. In fact, I spoke to Mr Bolton only once, and that was what I thought appropriate, to confirm the qualifications and expertise of Mr Currie, something that somebody would have done in any circumstance. I wanted to make sure that Mr Currie represented his qualifications, his expertise and his skill level appropriately. In fact, Mr Bolton confirmed that was the case.

Mr Laughren: That's very interesting. Is the minister denying that Mr Currie, when he was still working for Coopers and Lybrand, was shown a very long list of privatization candidates which he then shared with his superiors at Coopers and Lybrand? If that's the case, since the minister chose not to share any list like that with the Legislature — we've only seen a very short list, which included a few trees in a tree nursery — I'd ask the minister, do you think it's appropriate that this firm, which has seen a long list that we haven't seen, then has access to the minister to talk about that, not just about Mr Currie's qualifications? Do you think that's appropriate? I'll tell you, that's in clear violation of Management Board guidelines. I'd ask the minister if he has looked into that and whether he thinks it's appropriate behaviour for him as minister.

Hon Mr Sampson: I think the member opposite is indicating that I referred or showed some list to Mr Bolton. In fact, that's not the case. I never showed Mr Bolton a list, because one didn't exist. The only informa-

tion we've disclosed that we have on companies that are considered for privatization are the ones I disclosed on Monday of last week, four companies.

The member may be referring to — and maybe he has now had a chance to look in his in basket — a report by the agencies, boards and commissions that was orchestrated by Mr Wood some time ago. There is a list of some companies where he suggested we might take a look at privatization. That perhaps is the list he's referring to. If he's suggesting that I referred some list to Mr Bolton in advance of the disclosure of the names that were released on Monday, the answer is no.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, my constituents have been urging me to tell you to get Highway 407 open. They want and need this highway for their business. What's the status as a result of the report that's come in?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I appreciate the question. Yes, we must get 407 open, because I believe Halton, Peel and York regions are certainly going to benefit in an economic sense with 407 open.

I was very pleased to find that the PEOs have found the highway very safe, but they did recommend that we consider doing some safety enhancements. We have begun the process of doing those enhancements, and we're somehow looking to open up this highway sometime towards the end of May or the early part of June.

Mr Spina: That's good news to hear. I also understand that some of these safety concerns you're addressing now are being done directly from the taxpayers' pocket. I didn't know whether this was something that was anticipated, or is this just something that's come up as a surprise to the ministry?

Hon Mr Palladini: Certainly the enhancements that we are taking on and doing were not part of the original project, of the \$930 million. These funds, which appear to be somewhere in the vicinity of between \$13 million and \$15 million, are going to be coming out of a contingency fund. Yes, the money is going to be spent, but we will recoup those dollars through tolling over the 25-year period.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. You'll be aware that Management Board intends to privatize the mail and the printing services in 15 ministries. The total operation involves some 120 individuals, about 30 of whom have developmental handicaps, hearing, visual and others, and some of whom have worked for the government for over 20 years. Many of these individuals came into the public service under governments that believed in fairness and equity, especially for the developmentally handicapped.

Minister, my question for you — and you're responsible for employment equity, although I know the name has now been changed to 1-800 the equal opportunity program — can you tell me what assurances you've won

on behalf of these workers so that when their jobs are privatized the principles of fairness and equity will be guaranteed in any contracts awarded to outside companies?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Thank you for the question. I'll pass it over to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Yes, we are looking at the mail services, the courier services, printing services, photocopying services, quite an array of services that in total cost the taxpayers about \$12 million a year. Management Board has looked into this, and there's a great possibility that the taxpayers could be saved a tremendous amount of money by contracting this out with the private sector.

But I will say that Management Board is concerned about the disabled people, challenged employees who are working in various positions, and extra points will be awarded to those potential employers, to those bidding, who guarantee to take on the existing staff. Through this process, we are attempting to ensure that as many of the existing staff are hired as possible.

1450

PETITIONS

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a very important petition to the government of Ontario, very timely. It says:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Minister of Health to provide appropriate levels of health care funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I expect a line in the budget specifically about Windsor hospital services.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions, hundreds in fact, signed by auto workers in Windsor, Oshawa and Brampton, forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, national president of the Canadian Auto Workers. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further, we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues in the NDP, I add my name to theirs.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail, and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation," and I think they're referring to the Marland bill, "that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

In the week we hope to pass the Wettlaufer resolution, I will affix my own signature thereto.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est) : Une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance dans toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord le l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que la fermeture de Montfort éloigne et diminue grandement l'accessibilité à une salle d'urgence pour plus de 150 000 personnes ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé offrant une gamme complète de services en français mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Attendu que l'on fait disparaître l'hôpital qui a un des meilleurs rendements de la province et qui, pour fins de comparaison, constitue l'exemple de choix du ministère de la Santé ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que

soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

C'est avec plaisir et honneur, Monsieur le député, que j'y appose ma signature.

NURSING STAFF

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition signed by literally hundreds of people from the community of Timmins in regard to cuts at the Extendicare nursing home in Schumacher, and also at the Golden Manor in regard to nursing care. It's entitled Fighting for Our Rights. It reads as follows:

"Please help us send a message to our government by signing our petition to stop cuts to nursing staff in nursing homes. Hopefully this petition will make a better life for the sick and the elderly people.

"Sick people are not asking to be sick. People at nursing homes are in need of special care.

"There are many disadvantages with the cuts in nursing staff that are to be made in the future. Disabled people will end up suffering more because they will not be getting the care they should have. Lack of proper care could lead to depression in some patients.

"At this moment, nurses have difficulty to keep up with their duties because there are so many sick patients in nursing homes. With the proposed cuts, the nurses who will be left working will get exhausted from rushing too much, which could lead to accidents. Furthermore, nurses will end up on sick leave because of stress and pressure.

"Just think of how these cuts would affect your family in need of special care."

It's signed by some 400 or 500 people within the communities of Timmins and Schumacher, and I sign the petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government of the province of Ontario."

1500

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition in regard to the current child care crisis in Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordability, accessibility and quality child care is a basic, important and fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to child care workers,

"We, therefore, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province and restore funding to their previous levels."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed by delegates to the weekend conference of the Ontario provincial council of the United Food and Commercial Workers, where Hamiltonian Maureen McCarthy was elected president of that provincial body. The petition reads as follows:

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose any attempts to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"We demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

On behalf of my colleagues, I add my name to theirs.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly concerning drinking and driving.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada; and

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash; and

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders; and

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences; and

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature to it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition signed by quite a few hundred people from the communities of Timmins, Iroquois Falls and Cochrane. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and critical social services; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programming; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services for the people they serve; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government in the province of Ontario."

I sign this petition.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we as parents believe that school councils should play an important role in education, with clearly defined responsibilities limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we as ratepayers are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives;

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of the schools to deal with broad policies as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

I sign this petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Shall the report be received and adopted? It is agreed.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? It's agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WORKERS' COMPENSATION
REFORM ACT, 1996LOI DE 1996 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA LOI
SUR LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other acts / Projet de loi 99, Loi assurant la stabilité financière du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs blessés, favorisant la prévention des lésions et des maladies dans les lieux de travail en Ontario et révisant la Loi sur les accidents du travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm most delighted to join in the so-called debate we've had arising out of the fundamental principles of Bill 99.

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: I know the member for Cochrane South doesn't want to hear too much of what would take him off the leftist cant he's usually got his mind trapped in.

Both critics and speakers of both opposition parties have started out on the fundamental premise that there really isn't a financial crisis involving the Workers' Compensation Board. That's like trying to imagine that there isn't a provincial deficit or debt.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You have it exaggerated, though.

Mr Hastings: Exaggerated or just a little bit, the reality is that there is a fiscal crisis involving the Workers' Compensation Board. How can we say that? When you have more funds going out than you have coming in, I would assume that is out of financial kilter, that things aren't in balance. I know to the members opposite it wouldn't mean much in terms of money, but it's a little over \$10.7 billion. To members on this side, in the government, that is an enormous amount of money in terms of what is owing if at midnight tonight all outstanding debts of the WCB had to be paid off. That would be all the pensions outstanding that had to be capitalized, that would be all the benefits that would be owing as of midnight tonight to injured workers who, unfortunately, got hurt on the job, and any other costs related to health care costs, particularly in the area of back problems.

The members of the opposition say, "You're again attacking injured workers." If that were true, it would seem to me they have failed to really appreciate the special significance of the cost of what is, in terms of the people at the board and people in the insurance industry, the rehabilitation industry and the medical community, an unfunded liability.

I don't think the members of the opposition have really taken into account that if you fail to deal with the problem of the unfunded liability, you are in effect making your own agency, that is there to deal with getting people back to work who unfortunately had a problem in the workplace — you are not dealing with the financials of the agency to protect people in the future who may unfortunately get hurt in the workplace, either through the traditional definition of a workplace injury or through the more prolonged and accumulated problems related to occupational health and safety. We might as well face reality and deal with the fundamental fact that we must approach and try to reduce the unfunded liability.

1510

Usually, people who want to downplay the significance of this have accepted, in the past, the assumptions of the WCB financial people that the outstanding liability would be completely eliminated by 2014. But I think that particular outcome is rather optimistic and perhaps pretty rosy, because it would depend on economic growth between 1997 and 2014 that would have to be a terribly robust economy. It seems to me rather unrealistic, in my estimation, to expect that you're going to have an economic growth rate of about 4% to 5% for the next 17

years. You may get some types of that rate of growth in some of those years, but it is extremely unrealistic to expect you're going to get it every year. If we don't look at the economics of business cycles, accept that there are such things, then you're going to have a problem ever getting this unfunded liability down.

The next problem I would like to focus on is why this government believes we must get some balance into a new Workers' Compensation Board, an insurance agency that will deal with the fundamentals of workplace accidents and occupational health and safety. This is something that is traditionally denied by the two opposition parties. I haven't seen them comment to any great extent on the proposed reforms that are going to come into place in terms of customer service in the new Workplace Health and Safety Agency and in the new insurance agency, formerly the board.

As most members in this House know, and members who aren't here who were here years ago, the history of the old WCB in terms of performing its obligations to injured workers is not the most satisfactory or one of those agencies on which you would place an excellent, five-star hotel type of rating for its service in dealing with injured or rehabilitated workers.

Most MPPs in this House recognize, whatever party they belong to, that the old WCB does not have a good record in dealing promptly with injured workers' injuries, whether it be the back type of problem, back recurrence, or total disability by somebody having a tragic accident in the workplace, who may even bleed to death. There does not appear to be, except in the rare instance, a great promptness, a great urgency to deal with each and every claim as it comes in. When we as MPPs have to intervene, when injured workers or rehabilitated workers who haven't been able to get a job in the workplace come back to us, they are absolutely frustrated with the existing system in terms of how they get response.

That is one of the issues in the new reorganization that I'm hopeful will lead to better service, particularly when you link up a claims adjudicator, a nurse case manager and a customer service person at the start of the filing of a claim. That customer service rep, as I understand, will interface not only with the injured worker whose claim has been reported and has to be investigated if there are outstanding problems of circumstances, but will also interface with that injured worker's employer.

In that regard, I believe we need to have that kind of interface in place to get some better customer service, excellence and values into the new organization. If we do not, we're going to continue to have the same type of prolonged slowness or even non-response to injured workers' claims, whether they be simple or complex claims. I have certainly had more than my share of WCB claims in terms of trying to get resolution of the problems.

Concomitant to trying to get better customer service to injured workers, rehabilitated workers, is the whole issue, in my estimation, of language. Most members of this House, if they read communications from the WCB, the correspondence they get, I'm sure are sometimes as baffled as I am about the type of language that is used in complex cases of injured workers that the old WCB —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The letters start with "Dear John." Which part don't you understand?

Mr Hastings: I know the member for Cochrane South wants to perpetuate the old system where you line up and you can say, as I've heard most of the members of the third party say, "What do you do as an MPP? We have a backlog of hundreds and hundreds of cases of WCB and we really work on them but we never really resolve them." There's a sort of comfortable status quo to their approach to trying to resolve workers' claims dealing with workers' compensation issues, rehabilitation issues. They'd prefer to have correspondence going back and forth. I have seen this from a rather intimate perspective. It's a pattern that has been going on for many years.

We've heard not only about problems of delay in payments, in non-response to other issues, whether they be of a health care nature related concern or of a rehabilitation concern, but I think it's also the language. In this country, Canada, we now have members from many diverse communities, newcomers to this country, some of whom have excellent language facility, others who have to get English as a second language, some of them in between.

Regardless, when you look at the actual type of correspondence and language coming from the old agency, there is a certain degree of assumption that you need a grade 13 or OAC completion of language to immediately grasp some of the more complex medical-rehabilitation language that you will find in these particular letters. The level of the language is in some instances, I believe, a deterrent to injured workers who have a legitimate appeal, prompting them not to appeal their particular concern immediately if they had their claim denied.

The language level in a survey 25 years ago certainly ascertained that you needed a grade 13 education to understand the level of communication you would find in letters of those days. I'm sure that today you will find that sort of problem, and that's one of the things I'm hoping the customer service people of the WCB will consciously set about trying to resolve.

Another thing we need to focus upon that the members of the opposition seem either to have ignored deliberately or accidentally is when they argue that there is no fiscal crisis. The previous government said that if we'd only left the measures in place that we had — a tripartite-type board, the usual approaches to dealing with vocational rehabilitation, slow response — in time the fiscal crisis would end and everything would be okay. In point of fact, that's not going to be the situation. If we do not get our costs under control, there will not be a viable, self-sustaining WCB or the newer name of the agency to deal with future injured workers.

1520

There is, I think, a sense of fundamental difference in philosophy that we hear from the other two parties. We usually hear today the word "right," the right of the injured worker to compensation. If a person has an accident in the workplace, and the medical evidence, witnesses or employer data and medical data all join together to confirm that an accident occurred, then naturally that injured worker ought to get paid promptly and fairly and quickly. But what we find in the members

of both opposition parties is a sense of that right being extended to an entitlement.

We have heard from previous speakers to date on Bill 99, particularly with respect to the inflation adjustments that were made in the mid-1980s by the previous Davis administration and carried on by the Liberal Party when they were the government between 1985 and 1990 and by the NDP in 1990 to 1995. That is again a confusion of language on what used to be called at that point in time disability awards.

You will hear from people opposite and you have heard from injured workers, through no fault of their own, that they have picked up on this lingo: "How do you expect us, as injured workers, to live on a pension, a disability award?" at that time possibly awarded in 1982 or earlier, or even up to 1993 or 1994, where they were making perhaps \$30,000 gross. When you reduced all the benefits out, they were netting down to about \$300 or \$400 a week. The degree of disability of the injury was possibly 10% or 15%. So they ended up perhaps getting \$80 to \$120 to \$150, depending on the type of injury the worker had unfortunately incurred. They were given the encouragement that once a vocational rehabilitation supplement had been eliminated, for whatever set of reasons, they were supposed to live on \$150 or \$200.

Obviously anybody in their right mind would know that the pension, the disability award, the non-economic loss or the future economic loss, the new terms that have come into vogue since changes to the act in 1993, really were never there to provide a level of living. They were simply there as a bridge. You can't live on \$180 or \$200 or \$80 a month. Anybody knows that when they look at the cost of living, whether it's in rural Ontario or in an urban area.

But usually the politicals of the day want to go about using this terminology, that a disability award is in fact a pension for life that you can live on, and that to me is where we have so much confusion and misunderstanding about what the role of workers' compensation and the new agency is about. It is not about entitlement. It is not about entitlement in terms of a continuing income security program, which members opposite usually want to put into the public dialogue about this issue.

If you're talking about a particular injured worker who is totally disabled, paralysed from an industrial accident, then naturally that entitlement is correct and natural and they ought to have sufficient amounts of money to live on for the rest of their born life if they can't work. But for a large proportion of injured workers today who are partially disabled, they were always given the lingo that you could get a pension and somehow you could live off it. I don't understand why this particular intrusion of language has been brought into the public policy debate, because it completely confuses people, completely misleads them.

We will, I'm sure, hear from the critics that somehow or other my remarks are to be construed as another attack on injured workers, which is absolute nonsense. What we're dealing with here is using real language, as we ought to find in the act, as to what the requirements are of somebody who unfortunately incurs an industrial accident; what they can expect in the new regime; how

they will be paid; what their obligations are in terms of the role of the injured worker to respond in a cooperative, factual manner on supplying health data in trying to inject the philosophy of a rapid response return to work. That's the real objective of this legislation, in addition to the prevention of workplace health and safety problems in the first place.

In the old system, adjudication of the claim was the top priority. We now have an opportunity, through this legislation, I believe, to turn that philosophy around so that we get it right at the start: workplace prevention of injuries on the job. If unfortunately you get hurt on the job, the person who incurs that misfortune gets dealt with in a fair and just way and also has vocational rehabilitation as a means of getting them back to work, either in their old job through workplace modification, through training or through some bridging, but to get them back to work and not keep them on the compensation system for years and years and years.

That has been the philosophy of all three parties in the past. I think at a minimal level of agreement, they would agree that we need to change the priorities of the old WCB, the new agency, to get the top priorities in place: Don't have an accident to start with, so you need all the types of backup to prevent that, to create that environment; then you require fast adjudication, as Sir William Meredith allowed in the original establishment of the old WCB in 1914; and finally, a fast, rapid response to work, to get them back, to get them active, not to have them sit at home and become, as we see in so many instances today, particularly with respect to back accidents, depressives, manic-depressives, all kinds of psychoses that the studies clearly show of a psychological, psychiatric or medical nature. The longer you have an injured worker out of the workplace, out of their employment, the greater the problems in getting them back to work, either in their old workplace or in a new work environment.

For these reasons and many others, I am very glad to see this government come forward with a strong, solid bill that changes the philosophy we've had for so many years in so many of these areas and gets us on to the right track in dealing with injured workers.

Finally, let me say with respect to the attack on injured workers and the \$6 billion we constantly hear as a refrain, if we look at the Liberal red book or their program of the 1995 election, they said the WCB was a mess. It needed major corrective changes. We are making those changes. Above all, it seems to me they have to agree that we are on the right track, because in that context they said that under the old WCB and its premium rates the climate for new jobs to be created in this economic environment was completely uncompetitive, not only for people who had never been injured but for those who were already injured.

That's one of the major challenges we face in balancing the cost of compensation with providing fair and just compensation for injured workers and those who are being rehabilitated in the new system. Therefore, I think this is a significant new beginning for changing the orientation, for changing the philosophy we've had for the last 40 to 50 years of seeing the WCB and its successor agencies as purely a supplier of income security.

They are not that. They are a bridge from what happened before to where that person will end up in the future. We have failed many injured workers with the existing status quo. That's why I believe this new, challenging Bill 99 will bring us many of the changes that will produce a better environment for workers' compensation in Ontario.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments.

Mr Patten: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale and his analysis; I found it very interesting. He began his discussion, I suppose, criticizing the opposition's critique addressing the unfunded liability. It seems to me that every party had said they were concerned about the unfunded liability. What we were concerned about was the manner in which it is being addressed. We believe the bill shows a strong bias towards the employers, because in addressing the unfunded liability, what they're doing is doing it on the backs of the injured employees. That's where the money is coming from.

He goes on to say that it was in deep debt for many years. I notice he didn't mention that in 1995-96 there was I think a \$500-million surplus. That showed that no, we on this side of the House don't believe that the crisis the government talks about is as severe as they state.

Yes, it should be addressed. Yes, there are refinements to make. Even if the government had come in with some kind of a sharing between the employers and the workers or the people on pension and the people on benefits, you might have had a little bit of sympathy. But all of it, \$6 billion worth, is coming from the injured employees. That's what we find totally unfair, because the whole program is to help them to get back to work, to help them be treated, and if they are not and if they are totally disabled, that they get the kind of support from which they can live with justice and with some degree of dignity as they face their future.

He also said we didn't address some of the areas of reform of the bill. I would point out to him that indeed we did. We have some concerns about the Occupational Disease Panel and we worry about its independence. We also worry about the appeal tribunal having to live under and not being able to question the policies of the board overall but only being able to comment on what has already been said.

Mr Bisson: After that speech, all I have to ask is, where's Ed Philip when we need him, when we had somebody in that riding who actually understood this issue?

Let's set a couple of things straight. The member across the way is trying to argue that somehow the government is right in saying there is a fiscal crisis within the Workers' Compensation Board. Let me just put it this way, to just cut to the point; I've got two minutes to make an argument that's about a five-minute speech. If an insurance company in the province of Ontario today had all its insured people come up and want their money all at once — in other words, everybody who had purchased life insurance died on the same day, 12 o'clock tonight, everybody who had disability insurance either for a mortgage payment, truck payment or income replace-

ment, if all of that was to come to an end tonight, 12 o'clock — that insurance company would have an unfunded liability. It's no different with the Workers' Compensation Board.

We as a government, under the Bob Rae government, 1990-95, accepted that yes, the board was going in the wrong direction, that their unfunded liability was increasing. We as a government in 1993 — and recognized long before that — passed legislation that turned that trend around. Since then, the Workers' Compensation Board has been posting a surplus every year. The unfunded liability is coming down, not going up.

So when the member tries to argue this whole thing about a crisis, it really is like the Minister of Education trying to create a crisis in education in order to prop up their argument that they've got to make the changes they want to within the workers' compensation system.

I don't have enough time to respond in detail; I will later on during my speech. But I wish the member would do his homework before starting his speech.

The other thing he talked about was the language of the board and how the FEL and NEL awards in 1993 got everything wrong. FELs and NELs came under Bill 162 in 1989 under the Liberal government. So I wish you'd do your research before you get up and start talking about something you clearly don't know a lot about.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My compliments to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for his words and his contribution to the debate. He spoke quite eloquently at the beginning about the day-to-day problems with service at the WCB. It's something that all of us as members have come to know as certainly a problem at the WCB. I know that under the new management it is getting better. I think this bill, Bill 99, will help speed up some of those processes to help that along.

The member also talked about the problem with the unfunded liability. The members opposite seemed to indicate that it wasn't that big a problem. He talked about comparing it to an insurance company. If the WCB was an insurance company regulated under the Insurance Act, the federal superintendent of insurance would have appointed a liquidator to seize its assets as soon as the unfunded liability had been incurred.

If the WCB was a pension benefit plan regulated under the Pension Benefits Act, the superintendent of pensions would already have ordered the implementation of a strategy to retire the unfunded liability; failure to do so would result in the winding down of the plan.

By all measures — the several others which I've mentioned before in the House, for instance, Ontario's 42% funding ratio being the second-worst in Canada — the unfunded liability is a problem, it is a reality and does need to be dealt with. I think the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale should be complimented for noticing that as well as complimented for talking about the very human side of service at the WCB for injured workers.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I want to acknowledge the members' statements about the situation and say that I think all parties agree there have been problems, and parties have responded in different ways. There has been ample debate about the way to solve those problems.

Where we part company is that in our view the problem of the unfunded liability can be dealt with in a reasonable amount of time without necessarily affecting injured workers the way the government's proposals do, particularly pensioners, whose income is extremely limited.

The previous government had a number of ideas around this that they began to implement. We presented a set of ideas that we believed would deal with the unfunded liability without cutting benefits to injured workers.

The question isn't whether or not we deal with the problem of the unfunded liability, the problem of the management of the board itself, the problem of the claims system, the adjudication system; the issue is how you go about it.

Indeed the member took some mirth in saying, well, you know, we said something different in the House than we did in the last campaign, which, number one, we don't agree with, but I'd point out to the member that what was in the final bill, Bill 99, didn't reflect even a percentage of what was in Mr Jackson's report. Indeed, the minister who began the process was removed from the file and the Minister of Labour took over. There was a perception, I think, in the government that perhaps Mr Jackson had gone soft. Having travelled the province, having heard injured workers, the government thought he wasn't going to be tough enough.

Well, you've got your bill. We think there's a better way.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr Hastings: I appreciate the remarks from the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Windsor-Walkerville. At least these two members seem to have some basic understanding of the problems facing us in the new workplace environment.

I read over and looked at and listened to the member for Ottawa Centre's remarks, and I thought he made some fairly balanced and realistic proposals from the perspective of being a constructive critic. However, I don't find that with the member for Cochrane South, who seems to want to perpetually deny that there's any problem on the financial side; things as they were going were pretty good. They had a royal commission which ate up about \$2 million but didn't come to any specific conclusions except to extend generally in its mid-term report what was already going on.

1540

The final thing I'd like to say is that the member for Cochrane South seems to think that if you just keep going the way things are, you'll eventually work out everything. The people who are involved and mired in such an intractable existing system just have to have tremendous patience and if they just have tremendous patience — or maybe if they go away even, that would be better. It seems to me that if he really understood the injured workers from Etobicoke-Rexdale — a good number of them came to me after the last election with the problems that had supposedly been already resolved, and I was absolutely shocked that we would have these

because, as he portrays reality, everything's okay the way it is and there are no problems with this system.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to stand today and speak on Bill 99, the new Workers' Compensation Act, the Workers' Compensation Reform Act as it's known, and it is in fact a new act. It's a complete rewrite of the Workers' Compensation Act and workers' compensation law in this province as we've known it.

The bill attempts to do a number of things. The bill attempts to deal with a perceived crisis in the unfunded liability. It attempts to deal with a number of issues that are viewed by the government — and I think many injured workers as well as employers — that the compensation system itself has not served anyone's interest, that there have been problems. Repeated governments over time, since 1914, have had to address the issues of compensation, fairness of compensation, the proper management of compensation in this province, and repeated governments have had some success, some failures. So this particular bill represents a great departure in the evolution of workers' compensation law in this province and a great departure from the principles of fairness of compensation.

I want to begin my statement today by putting the bill in a context of both the government's overall agenda and the government's labour agenda. There is no doubt and no question that the government is fulfilling its commitments on WCB. The government in opposition had a 21-point plan around reform and what we see in this bill largely reflects those realities.

We said at the time and still believe that the so-called crisis in WCB could be dealt with in an effective fashion, the unfunded liability eliminated and the administration and management of the compensation system in Ontario could be reformed without serious harm to the benefits enjoyed by injured workers. "Enjoyed" is probably too strong a word, because indeed if one speaks to a pensioner, somebody speaks to somebody on temporary disability, temporary benefits, one knows that the life of an injured worker, the livelihood of an injured worker is not one that we would want.

The compensation act that we see today, that we've had in Ontario till now, was amended by the last Tory government in this province through Bill 101. That bill was introduced by the Davis government and it was implemented to a large extent by the Peterson Liberal government. Bill 101 was a response to a situation that was occurring in Ontario in the 1970s and early 1980s. Professor Paul Weiler was appointed by the Davis government to review the compensation system and its shortcomings in this province. Professor Weiler did extensive work over a four- or five-year period of time and reported back to the Davis government in what has become known as the Weiler report.

That report, among other things, recommended that we go to a system where we pay injured workers based on net income, it created a recommendation around the Occupational Disease Panel and it recommended a number of other reforms which were implemented and passed into law by Bill 101.

This bill effectively undoes those reforms, reforms that were brought in by a previous Conservative administration, reforms that were brought in to recognize a system that at the time had serious shortcomings. It also attempts to change a number of other issues that were dealt with post-Weiler. But with reference to the government's overall labour agenda, it is apparent in this bill, as it was apparent in Bill 49, apparent in Bill 7, that this government does not respect working people or their representatives.

The government's agenda is one-sided. We said during the debate on Bill 7 that the government's labour agenda would create a climate of labour instability in this province the like of which we had never seen. We said during that debate that labour law in this province has evolved over time, it has evolved in a number of ways, and I must say, it has never evolved to the complete satisfaction of either labour or management. We have evolved our labour law. Over time, we have had a climate of relative labour stability in this province that has contributed to a climate that, despite ups and downs over time, historically has been conducive to investment.

Indeed, one could argue that until the advent of the Common Sense Revolution and this government, Ontario had evolved a very mature system of collective bargaining, a system that saw fewer days lost to strikes and other job actions than most other comparable jurisdictions. It was a system that recognized the partners in our economy. It recognized that it takes the application of labour and capital to make our economy grow. Throughout time, with varying degrees of success, we have evolved those laws.

Then along came this government that was intent on upsetting the apple cart, on destabilizing labour markets, and most important, a government that wasn't prepared to acknowledge the contribution that working people make in our communities, in our neighbourhoods and in our overall economy. So we tipped the scales and we created a climate that I submit is less conducive to investment, particularly when the economy goes into a cyclical downturn, and we know that will happen.

Bill 99, put in the context of the Common Sense Revolution and the government's overall agenda, is an attack on working people, an attack on the principles of collective bargaining and an attack on the kinds of economic institutions that in our view, if not kept in proper balance, will lead to slower economic growth or indeed no economic growth.

What has happened since Bill 7? We have seen what has happened since Bill 7: more days lost to strikes and work actions, more grievances being filed, more job actions. People don't take that seriously on the other side. They think they're winning the war, and they see it as a war unfortunately, instead of seeing the labour market and a climate for job creation that recognizes that labour harmony is an important component of economic growth. So the government has created a situation not just through this bill but through all of its actions to date that says: "We don't care about working people. We don't believe they have a place at the table and we don't believe their interests should be treated fairly." Successful governments historically have attempted to deal with that balance, and successive governments have to a large extent been successful.

1550

We think that over time this government's labour agenda will be proven to be foolhardy, that ultimately the climate that will result, that is resulting, that has resulted from its agenda will in fact harm job creation, harm our ability to find work for all the people of this province.

Indeed, if one looks at communities in this province where there is a history of strong, stable labour relations, one sees that there are fewer days lost to strikes, fewer days lost to job action. The government doesn't recognize that; the government wants to return to a completely confrontational system of labour-management relations. Bill 99, I submit, is yet another spoke in that wheel, a wheel that will come off the car because it fails to recognize the long-term significance and import of labour, both organized and unorganized, to the healthy functioning of our economy.

I want to deal with the current compensation climate in the province of Ontario today. We know that today over 200,000 Ontarians are on long-term WCB disability; 372,000 WCB claims were made last year, 372,000 claims in one year. The government in this bill suggests that somehow it has an agenda to improve the health and safety climate in this province. Nothing, I submit, could be further from the truth. Time and again, the government's rhetoric is betrayed by its actions. Time and again, the government has said one thing and done another. The spin doctors, the gurus, the whiz kids spin it like they care about health and safety, yet they set the health and safety clock back, I respectfully submit, generations.

Compensation in the absence of enforceable health and safety standards, an inspectorate, doesn't make any sense. So while it says it wants to save money on compensation, it refuses to invest in health and safety. But I guess we ought not to be surprised. This seems to be a consistent theme in what the government does.

Let's look at health care. The government says it's making the tough cuts and reinvesting. The reality is not the same; the reality is quite the opposite. While hospitals are being closed in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa, Toronto and Windsor, the reinvestments that have been contemplated have not been happening.

I take my own community by way of example, a community which in 1992 voluntarily set out on a path to consolidate its health care and reinvest the savings in what we hoped would be a better way. The fact is that we are in the process of closing two hospitals. Annual savings are estimated at approximately \$22 million and our reconfiguration document, our Win-Win document, contemplated a capital investment in excess of \$100 million in order to make our health care system state-of-the-art, in order to make our health care system responsive to the needs of the first part of the 21st century, in order to ensure that the people in my community have access to the finest services available.

That plan was on course until June 1995. Then this government came along and said, "We will not reinvest in capital." They cut it in half; they said \$48 million. That's why we still don't have the promised MRI operating, and that's why we don't have the paediatric psychiatric beds that were contemplated, and that's why the two remaining emergency rooms in Windsor are overburdened

by anyone's definition, and that's why we've closed a third of our acute care beds without one dollar being reinvested in community-based services of any sort.

I say to those people in Thunder Bay, in Sault Ste Marie, in Sudbury, in Ottawa and Toronto, when they tell you they're going to reinvest, don't believe them. They've had a chance; they've had two years to respond in my community, and they haven't.

I return to this notion of the government's actions betraying its rhetoric. The Minister of Labour and her acolytes have attempted to suggest to injured workers, the labour community and the province that this bill will make the compensation system work better, that this bill will cure what ails that system. I submit that what it does is penalize injured workers so the government can make an unrealistic premium cut.

We think the premium cut is wrong at this time. We advocated a freeze in premiums. But the government barrels ahead. We think it's as foolish as the tax cut, financing close to \$20 billion over the life of the government in order to give a tax cut that every objective analysis says will not stimulate growth the way the government suggests. We think if the government had been serious about the unfunded liability, it would have set aside its rhetoric and recognized, as the KPMG study did, that our compensation rates weren't out of line. In fact, we were very competitive relative to a number of jurisdictions, and the first priority should have been to streamline the administration so that injured workers and employers could enjoy the benefits of a better compensation system. But the government barrelled ahead. Yes, it said it would do it, but it's wrong. It's bad public policy. The focus ought not to be on that premium reduction, but rather on making the system work better, making the system work in the interests of injured workers and employers.

How does the government fund this 5%? It starts by reducing the level of benefits to workers. When you want to save money in compensation, there's only so much you can get out of administration. Benefits to workers is where it is. So what do we see? We see a government that says, "We're prepared to reduce the income of injured workers in order to give a 5% premium reduction to employers." We see virtually full deindexation in this bill, indexation that was fought for long and hard and came about in the last Liberal government. The theme is consistent: Make the injured worker pay.

Travel this province as I have and meet with injured workers, and pensioners particularly, injured workers on pensions, a very restricted income, generally speaking a poor quality of life, resultant first from their injury and then from their income. This government ought to have thought about creative ways to respond to the range of problems that confront any compensation system, instead of simply cutting benefits and giving employers a break at the same time. But that's a consistent theme.

Tomorrow we'll see a budget that will barrel ahead with an income tax cut, even though the government will raise property taxes. This government, the Tory government, will be responsible, I submit, for the largest property tax increase in the history of this province. What does that say? It shifts the burden of taxation. It shifts the

burden to a less fair form of taxation, from one which recognizes ability to pay to one which doesn't. It will cost the taxpayers of this province enormously. Instead of being closer to a balanced budget sooner, we're financing a tax cut. We say you ought to have focused on the deficit first and then dealt with the dividend that comes from that later.

1600

That dividend could take a number of forms. That dividend could in fact be a tax cut, but perhaps it could be a tax cut to property taxes. Perhaps it could be the restoration of the property tax credit for seniors, which the previous government took away. Perhaps it could be an investment in our post-secondary institutions, investments in research and development that would lift us from 48th to first.

We have failed to recognize in this agenda that there are alternative paths to an era of government responsibility, fiscal responsibility. No one disagrees with the need to deal with the province's financial circumstances. Where we part company is how you get there and what priorities you place on what issues.

We could have had a balanced budget much sooner. The next government will have less room to manoeuvre in terms of health care and education and jobs because of the narrow agenda being pursued by this government. Tax cuts should be part of any dividend related to getting our province's financial house in order, but the house ought to be in order before we contemplate that tax cut, and that tax cut ought to be contemplated in light of our needs as a community and as a society. And whatever benefits accrue to the difficult decisions that are being made today ought to be shared fairly among all people, among all income groups; not disproportionately by the wealthy, not disproportionately by employers over employees, but rather, equitably. Indeed, I would submit that an income tax cut to those in the lowest end of the spectrum makes much more sense than the tax cut that this government proposes. But, again, this government is a government of those of means.

We see in this bill a number of provisions that will enhance and protect the rights of employers, as I said earlier, at the expense of injured workers. We see in the tax cut that the wealthiest among us will benefit the most, while those at the bottom end of the scale will have less access to services, and we all will suffer in terms of our health care system and our education system.

We submit that proper compensation reform — and I don't think there's a member in the House who would disagree that changes need to be made. I don't believe the old system was serving injured workers particularly well. I don't believe it was serving employers well. But I don't believe that the way to fix the system is to ignore the needs of either partner. Indeed, when one looks at our system of compensation, one can either say it's too expensive or one could argue it's progressive, and I believe it's progressive. I believe it's a system that has served injured workers better than others. I for one don't believe we ought to be penalizing injured workers and I don't think we should be apologizing for saying that we have a system that attempts to deal with injured workers fairly.

What we do know is that injured workers will not be treated as fairly under the new system, under the new regime, as they used to be, and the name change won't conceal that, it won't camouflage it. Government members, when they travel this summer to do hearings on this bill, will hear from injured workers in Windsor, they will hear from injured workers in Kenora, they will hear from injured workers in Sudbury, from every part of the province, that they are going to suffer even more as a result of this. People of good conscience have to stand up and say that the policy the government is pursuing is not only wrong from the perspective of an injured worker, not only is it inequitable, but it's bad public policy. It is the type of public policy that will create division. It is the type of public policy that will see haves and have-nots. The lines are being drawn in the sand.

I want to deal with three issues specifically in the bill that are of particular interest to me, and I have spoken to the Minister of Labour about these matters. First is the Occupational Disease Panel. That panel was created, as a result of Weiler, to give the board and the government independent advice with respect to compensation issues surrounding disease. Many of the government members in this House will not remember the days prior to this. They won't remember that every time there was an elevated incidence of mortality in a workplace, a commission was appointed that studied an issue and inevitably found that there was just reason for compensation.

In spite of this, the government moves ahead and gets rid of the disease panel, which we think is a mistake again; not only a mistake from the perspective of those workers who are paying the price but also from the employers' perspective. The disease panel, if properly administered, if properly staffed, has played and could continue to play a very useful role in helping the compensation board and indeed, because of the amendments the minister herself made to compensation earlier on, give good and useful advice with respect to what should and should not be compensated.

The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal: Again, government members will not remember the days when the board acted as prosecutor and adjudicator and judge. The Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal was set up so that there could be an independent judge; so that every case, every claimant, at the last level of appeal, could be satisfied that he or she was getting a fair hearing. You are ignoring the pages and pages of testimony that are in our own Hansards from the period prior to the implementation of WCAT in 1986-87. You are ignoring the recommendations of Paul Weiler. You are ignoring the advice of compensation experts on both the employer and employee sides. You are cutting the office of the worker adviser and the office of the employer adviser.

Compensation claims, whether they be workers' or employers', are complicated and difficult. Every member of this House knows that, particularly those members who come from large urban industrial areas, and every member knows that the nature of claims today is far more sophisticated than it was. What you do is you take away perhaps a worker's only representative. Yes, unionized workers will be represented well. Yes, those workers we

can handle in our offices will be represented well. But what about the tens of thousands, the vast majority of workers in this province, who aren't?

I would like to conclude by saying to the government, your agenda has been clear and you're following it. It's one that is designed to penalize injured workers, in our view. We proposed, and still believe, that the administration and finances of the board could be set well, indeed were on a course to be set well, without making the kinds of dramatic cuts that you have made to injured workers.

1610

A government that's pursuing a balanced and fair policy recognizes that labour law in this province has evolved over time, with neither side getting everything it wanted. But what you have been intent on doing since you've come to office is not only to not give working people, particularly in this case injured workers, a fair shake; it has been your agenda to take away, to set labour law back.

I would submit, in conclusion, that the consequence of this policy will be a labour market climate that does not increase investment but rather hurts investment. The government can get away with it while the economy is strong, but it will catch up with you — we're already seeing that — in terms of strikes and lost workdays.

The government ought to withdraw this bill and treat injured workers with fairness and respect.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): In using my two minutes to respond to my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville's presentation, let me say first of all that he leaves his successor big shoes to fill in terms of the commitment he brought to the labour portfolio as the critic for his party. But when we listen to his speech, certainly we see him seeking to back away from things that were said in the red book. In that red book, of course, there was an attempt to appease the right-wing position on this issue. That was there. He wasn't a part of that caucus, but certainly that was where his party was.

Having worked with him for the first couple of years of this term, I certainly felt for him personally when the results of the leadership of his party didn't work out the way he had hoped. I feel that way even more so today when I hear the member for Windsor-Walkerville speaking out so strongly and fervently against Bill 99, because the new leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario says he likes Bill 99.

Much of what the member for Windsor-Walkerville has said I'm certainly in agreement with and can support, but the Liberals are quite comfortable with the 5% cut in premiums, and there we very much part company. That 5% cut in premiums means that \$6 billion goes from the pockets of injured workers into the pockets of the corporate people who owe that bill in the first place. The unfunded liability of the WCB is not a debt of the taxpayers, of the people of Ontario; it is a debt of the employers in the province to current and future injured workers. When we look at Bill 99 from that perspective and see who the losers are and who the winners are, it's clear that this government is taking care of their corporate

pals, and the vulnerable injured workers of today and tomorrow are paying the cost of this government taking care of their friends.

Mr Maves: I want to thank the member for Windsor-Walkerville for his contribution to the debate, and I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for reminding us of the red book. The member opposite complained that his government wouldn't bring in tax cuts until later on, until the budget was increased, but in the red book I have to remind him that they promised a 5% tax cut over five years, because "rising taxes also kill jobs," they say.

Some of the tax cuts they talked about: "reduce the...business corporate tax rate, \$50 million; reduce the number of small businesses required to file for the corporate minimum tax; give business a 10% tax credit; offer favourable tax treatment to mining companies." So the member opposite, when he says he doesn't agree with our tax cut, ran on something quite different.

The member opposite also said that we didn't have a very good health and safety record and what we had done to date didn't show very well for health and safety. I must tell you that right now we are recruiting 20 new inspectors to fill vacancies that the NDP, the previous government, ignored. Our inspections of workplaces already are up 34%. We've had 18% more field visits, and it is projected that will increase to 31% more field visits than in previous years. We've also issued 32% more orders to employers, and that's going to go up to 46%.

One thing this minister did when she came into office was to say that she was not going to compromise health and safety. She has increased the amount of inspections and field visits that have occurred and she's increasing the amount of inspectors we have in the field.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): During the comments of the member for Windsor-Walkerville, he touched on the lack of respect this government has for the worker and the Minister of Labour's lack of respect for the worker out there. I pointed out a good number of times in this House — you will know about the minister's inaction when it came to one of the longest-running strikes in this province, that of course being in Red Lake at Gold Corp. It just shows you the attitude that this minister has, that this government has, towards the worker. As that strike heads towards a year, I've requested a number of times for the minister — she keeps telling me she's doing everything in her power and she tells me there's a possibility for two different commissions to be established, yet she hasn't moved on either one of them, a lack of commitment very clearly shown by this minister.

In respect to Bill 99, we know that this legislation will be taken on the road for committee hearings, with the committee travelling the province to listen. I hope they listen very carefully, because as some of the previous speakers have indicated, a good number of injured workers, probably more than there should be, are coming into our offices on a daily basis, continually, having problems. It will be those people that the committee will hear from. It is my sincere hope that once they listen to the injured workers, once they find out what the problems with Bill 99 are, they will come back and we will see action on this piece of legislation that will service the

need out there for it, service the needs of those injured workers.

Interjection: Don't hold your breath.

Mr Miclash: As my colleague says, don't hold your breath, but in all sincerity I do hope they will be able to come back and make changes that will be in accordance with what is needed out there in the field.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have the chance to respond briefly to the speech presented by the member for Windsor-Walkerville and to say to him that I obviously, as my colleague from Hamilton Centre has indicated, feel generally very comfortable with the position he has taken today and that I think he has generally taken on many labour issues, as well as on WCB matters in particular; and to say that I find the position he's taken today much closer to the position we have had as a New Democratic Party caucus, and interestingly enough, quite different from the position he and his Liberal colleagues ran on in the last election.

My friend across the way from Niagara Falls has on more than one occasion stood up and read from the red book whenever Liberal members have spoken on this issue. I think it's appropriate that we remind each other of the positions we've taken. I just have to say in passing that I would have found it really interesting to see how the member for Windsor-Walkerville would have reacted had he been the Minister of Labour, if his party had won the government in the last election, rather than the critic for that portfolio. I think he would have had a hard time reconciling the position he took today with the position his party took in the red book.

As I say, I find it heartening that he has come to the position he has, which is in defence of injured workers, in trying to find, yes, the right balance that needs to be found to protect the interests of employers as well through this legislation, but understanding that at the heart of the matter, at the heart of what exists in the legislation on workers' compensation, is that basic premise that goes back to 1914 when there was the clear understanding enshrined in legislation that said that injured workers, among other things, would get fair compensation for injuries sustained on the job. I'm glad to see that he is now very clearly supporting that notion.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Walkerville has two minutes to respond.

Mr Duncan: In listening to the comments from my colleague on the government side, I'm reminded of the line in Rudyard Kipling's poem *If*: "If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools." Perhaps it should be "twisted by Maves to make a trap for fools." It's yet another example of the way this government twists the facts.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Could you repeat that?

Mr Duncan: Read your Kipling.

To my colleagues in the NDP, I wasn't here. It's a new day. The position I've outlined today is consistent with what we said then and it stays the same. I enjoy watching the New Democrats defending legislation that a Liberal government implemented. I remind my colleagues in the third party that they took the first step to deindexing benefits. It was the Liberal Party that fully indexed WCB

benefits in this province. What I have said today is entirely consistent with what we said in the campaign and with what we believe in today: fairness, equity and balance in the workplace; labour law and compensation law that attempts to recognize the needs of both partners in our labour markets.

1620

I say to the government that whether it be in labour law or whether it be in economic policy, a position of balance is one that will work better. The tax cuts we propose are modest by comparison. Unlike the New Democrats, who got rid of property tax credits for seniors, we might restore them. Let's start to have a debate around the types of cuts, the kinds of program services we want in the 21st century, and let's debate them with fairness and openness, not with blinders from either the left or the right.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to join in this debate, although I want to say at the outset that if the member for Windsor-Walkerville wants to debate the issue of what happened to tax credits for seniors, we can do that gladly. But you'd rule me out of order, Mr Speaker, if I went on at length about that. What we did on that issue when we were in government was to make those tax credits more available to people, to seniors in the lower-income bracket, and that's very much in keeping with our notion that one of the roles of government is to ensure that we collectively have laws and regulations that look after and help to look after those who are most in need.

What we are seeing here in Bill 99, the workers' compensation being changed, is in fact the opposite. Having said that, I can also quickly say that that doesn't particularly surprise us, because this is legislation that is so clearly in line with the Mike Harris agenda, so clearly in line with the notion we have seen from the Mike Harris Conservative government of Ontario that what you do in government, in their view, is that you rejig the laws, rejig the regulations and re-establish the system in a way that it helps those more who are already reasonably well-off, and you do that even if you have to take away from those who are less well-off.

We see that here in spades. My colleague our critic for the labour portfolio and workers' compensation, the member for Hamilton Centre, has made this point repeatedly in his intervention in this debate and in questions he has put to the Minister of Labour, in pointing out that what we have here through this legislation and the surrounding actions the government has taken is taking away \$15 billion from injured workers through the cuts being made through this legislation, through the changes to the unfunded liability in particular.

What is happening? Is that going towards the unfunded liability? Is that all going towards reducing this debt, as the members opposite like to call it? Of course not. At least \$6 billion of that is being put back into the pockets of employers across the province. That is just so clearly consistent with what the Mike Harris government has been doing in any of the important areas. You take away from those who are less well-off and you give the money back to those who are already reasonably well-off. That's what is going on. It's as simple as that.

There are, of course, a lot of details, a lot of other changes, a lot of significant changes being made through this bill, but what it comes right down to at the end of the day is exactly that basic notion: lowering the standard of living for those who are already less well-off, those in this case who have also suffered injury on the job, and taking that money, a good chunk of it, and putting it back into the hands of employers.

I guess it's fair to ask, is there a problem here that needs to be addressed? With every piece of legislation that comes forward, it should be our first task as legislators to ask, what is the problem that's being fixed? Why is there a need for this particular piece of legislation? Is it because there are still problems at the Workers' Compensation Board under the system? Of course there are. We would be the first to agree that there are still problems. We should point out that all of us would recognize that from the time the workers' compensation system was set up back in 1914, government after government after government realized that there continued to be problems.

From that historic compromise reached back in 1914, when employees gave up the right to sue their employers in exchange for gaining the right to adequate compensation for injuries sustained on the job, there continued to be various attempts to try and keep those two interests in balance: the need for compensation to injured workers, with obviously a sense that the responsibility carried on by the employers, in paying for the system, needed to be done in a way that ensured they would not be driven out of business.

We have to keep remembering that what employers collectively gained through that basic compromise of 1914 was the right to be free of legal action against them by people injured on the job. If there had not been that big step taken in 1914, we would have a situation where employees injured on the job would have to go to the courts to seek redress for their injuries; they would have to establish that the injury was something that happened on the job and, as a result of that, seek whatever the appropriate compensation under the circumstances might be. I think it's important that we put that on the table as well.

When we talk about the question of premiums employers have to pay, when we talk about the unfunded liability, or debt, to use the jargon, it's also important to underline that there's another basic protection that the present system gives employers: the protection to be free from legal action against them by their employees for injuries sustained on the job. In fact, that is something employees continue to give up in exchange for having the right to fair compensation. Why do I stress that notion? Because while it's that kind of balance that governments have tried, as I've said, over the years to maintain and perfect and improve upon, it's that kind of balance that Bill 99 throws completely out the window.

What we are seeing now through this legislation is, overall, the balance being tilted certainly more towards employers in a number of changes that come about through this legislation, and as a result of that you're going to have injured workers who already have suffered an injury to themselves. In some cases we're talking about people who have died on the job. But for the

thousands who, year after year, are injured on the job, it means that when they look to the system for help to get fair compensation while they are injured and, second, to get assistance to be able, hopefully, to eventually return to work, I would argue that on both those fronts the help is not going to be there to the extent it needs to be.

We know there continue to be problems in the system. We've talked here already about the changes we brought about as a government to deal with the unfunded liability and the concomitant issues around that. I want to say, as a member of the government of that time, that we made those changes. It was with some regret that I supported, but none the less I supported and remain responsible and take my responsibility for, the package we brought forward. I say with some regret, because one of the things that happened was that it introduced the deindexation of benefits for workers.

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But what it also did — and this is what led me to be supportive of what we did at the time — was it also recognized that there were some 45,000 injured workers across the province, older injured workers, whose benefits were certainly nowhere near the kind of support they needed to be able to continue to sustain themselves and their families. These were largely people for whom there was no likely prospect of returning to work, because of the seriousness of injury, the degree of injury; quite frankly that and a combination of age. So we increased by up to \$200 a month the benefits for those injured workers.

That, I certainly felt and feel today, was a step in the right direction. It was ensuring that there was a reason beyond just the simple ledger reason, as important as that may be, for making the changes we did.

In putting together the changes, we also set forth a way to begin to deal with the unfunded liability, which we recognized was a problem and would continue to be a problem if it was allowed to continue to grow. These steps we took began to bring down the unfunded liability. We know, just as a comparison between 1996 and 1995, it has gone down by half a billion dollars. It has gone down, I gather, by over \$1 billion since the time those changes were put in place. It will continue to go down even if no action were taken by this government. That is the point I want to stress: The unfunded liability is an issue, it is a concern; it is not a crisis; it is not a crisis in the least.

What we have here, in terms of the government's actions and justifying their actions with respect to the unfunded liability, making that the number one reason they are bringing this piece of legislation in front of us, is the same kind of motion we have seen from minister after minister in this government, saying, "We've got a massive problem, indeed we have a crisis." Who among us can forget the master of all crises, the Minister of Education, but he may have simply voiced what minister after minister, and certainly what the Minister of Labour is doing in this area of public policy, which is to pretend to believe, to set out to tell people there is a crisis so that they can justify the actions they are taking.

If you create a sense that there is a crisis in the unfunded liability, that the workers' compensation system

is on the verge of bankruptcy, then you can go around and say, "We have to take dramatic steps, drastic steps to cut down the debt."

Let's take a look at what this unfunded liability is all about. The unfunded liability is what the Workers' Compensation Board would have to pay out to all injured workers if you had to pay out today every claim or every entitlement that every injured worker has the right to receive in full for the lifetime of all those injured workers. It is just a preposterous way to get at the notion that there is a crisis here. It is exaggeration in the extreme, because that kind of situation is not going to happen.

Does that mean you take that and you say, "Well, then, you don't have to worry about the unfunded liability"? Of course not. I'm not suggesting that for a second. But I am suggesting that when government ministers take that notion of the unfunded liability to such a ridiculous extreme as they have done, to say that it has to be the driving force behind these changes, then they too, quite frankly, are not just exaggerating, but they are really asking us to believe something which is completely out of the realm of reality, because while the unfunded liability remains a concern, there is a process under way, there are steps under way, there is legislation on the books now that will deal with that unfunded liability in the kind of time frame that's reasonable. The numbers we had set out and the changes we had brought about would have seen the unfunded liability brought down significantly over the next number of years. I think that was and still remains a reasonable way to go.

What is not reasonable is to see the government, under the pretence of wanting to deal with the unfunded liability, strip the workers' compensation system down to its bare bones. This is not just a bill that deals with the unfunded liability; this is a bill that, based on that premise the government wants to argue, that there is a crisis that has to be dealt with — and they make the link, of course, between that and the debt that exists across the province, even though they know the unfunded liability is not a public debt; it is something that exists there that continues to be the responsibility of all the employers in the province collectively that are covered under the workers' compensation system, again, I remind people, for the basic protection they have of never having to worry about a lawsuit coming on behalf of a worker, present or past, who has been injured on the job. That is the basic protection they have.

The government can continue to pretend it's this question of the unfunded liability that is driving its actions and needs to drive its actions to the extreme they are, but they know and we know that is not the case. They know that and we know that, because if the unfunded liability was such a major crisis as they would like us to believe, then there would be no justification for them to take \$6 billion out of that \$15 billion they are taking out of the pockets of injured workers and return it to employers; they would take that \$6 billion and say, "We're putting it towards the unfunded liability because it's such a major crisis."

Why is it a crisis one minute and then not a crisis the next? It's a little bit like the tax cut. The government says, "We need to have a tax cut to put money in the

pockets of people so they can go out and invest that, create jobs." But then of course they're cutting money, transfers to the municipalities, to others, that will result in tax increases, and the jobs aren't being created. We're losing our services in health care and education, in our social services, the jobs aren't being created, the debt is going up as a result of the government having to borrow money to pay for the tax cut, and all of us are coming out losers, except of course those who are most well-off. We're seeing the same pattern again here under Bill 99 with workers' compensation.

The government talks a lot about how what they are doing in this bill, beyond dealing with the issue of the unfunded liability, is putting a real emphasis on rehabilitation. Again I would say, in fairness, that all of us would be more than supportive of the need to ensure that a couple of basic things happen: first, that workers who are injured on the job are helped to return to work as quickly as possible; and second, that the employers retain a responsibility to rehire workers injured on the job. But we all would want to be honest with each other and admit it takes more than just writing those things into legislation for them to happen. It takes enforcement and it takes the process of working with the injured worker and the employer to make sure that happens.

I find it passing strange that here's a government — we heard it from the Minister of Labour; we've heard it from the parliamentary assistant — time after time saying, "We want to put an emphasis, through this legislation, on returning to work, on rehabilitation," and yet we know that as we speak the rehabilitation system within the board is basically being stripped away, that vocational rehabilitation is going to become a thing of the past as they continue to get rid of people in the system who do that job now.

I think it's fair to ask the question, how is this going to happen? Magically? How is that going to happen? Do you think that just by simply writing something into legislation it's going to work? I'm not surprised that's the attitude this government takes, because when I look at a number of other areas of policy, when I look, for example, at the issue of equity, there they've taken away structures we had put in place, whether it's the employment equity legislation or the whole advocacy system in legislation and protection, and there they are just pretending that by simply saying, "We all need to be fair," by having in place laws that already exist on the books, that somehow that's going to be sufficient.

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It isn't, because you need in place the laws, yes, to provide people the basic protection, but then you also need in place the systems, the supports that will make sure that people who are entitled to those protections are able to exercise their rights. What are we seeing in this legislation? We are seeing more and more examples of the rights of injured workers being stripped away.

We have had for some time now WCAT, the appeals tribunal, which has been separate and distinct from the Workers' Compensation Board. Why? Because finally the laws of this province have accepted, or did accept back in the early 1980s, the mid-1980s, that it was important to ensure there was an appeals system, yes, inside the

workers' compensation system first, but ultimately outside the workers' compensation system, so that injured workers who felt unfairly treated by the system — and there are lots of those; we all know about them — would have at the end of the day an appeals system that wasn't the courts, that was a tribunal that could give decisions in a faster, more expedient way, but still was clearly removed from the workers' compensation system.

What do we see in Bill 99? We see that basic division being done away with. We see provisions in this bill that will ensure that when it comes to policy areas, the Workers' Compensation Board, or whatever they're going to call it under this new system, whenever it sets out policy directions, the tribunal cannot change that, cannot in individual circumstances decide to set aside those policy directions, even though they may believe and they may find on the facts as they have before them that the injured worker is entitled to a benefit or compensation that the Workers' Compensation Board has denied. So that distinction that has become so significant in allowing injured workers to feel some sense of justice, that they would have a way to get decisions rendered outside and aside from the policy directions of the Workers' Compensation Board, is disappearing.

Where is the balance? The balance certainly is not going to be there. Not only is it not going to be there in favour of injured workers, but it is clearly being shifted all the way over in favour of employers.

Do I not have any sympathy for the kind of situation that employer are in? Of course I do. I talk every day with small business owners in my riding and whenever you start talking with any of them about what is one of the problems of doing business, they inevitably will talk about the costs, among other things, of workers' compensation. I want to be very clear that that's something I acknowledge is there.

You fix that problem not by this kind of patchwork system that this government seems to be so intent on continuing, which is taking money away from the injured workers and putting it into the pockets of the employers, as if then you've created some kind of a balance. You haven't. You have simply created another problem that's going to be there for years to come and you again solve the problem for those who on the relative scale are better off in their favour by taking money away from those who are less well off.

I say that as somebody who from the time I first was elected to this chamber and from years even before that was well aware of the plight of many injured workers across this province, and certainly in my own area of Metropolitan Toronto. As I continue to talk today with my constituents, I know that through my office and through many of our offices, we deal on a day-to-day basis with many injured workers who still today feel, even though they may have been injured a number of years ago in some cases, or others who have been injured just recently, that they are not yet receiving the kind of attention they need.

One member I know earlier talked about entitlement, that we have created a situation in which people feel entitled to this kind of compensation. I would say to him, yes, they should be entitled to fair compensation. They

should be entitled to know that if they are injured on the job, yes, they have to establish that the injury was on the job and the degree of injury, and there's a whole process to deal with that. But injured workers should never be in a position where in addition to the injury they have sustained to their body, or in some cases not just to their body, they have to continue to fight the system, now aided and abetted even more by this government, to establish their right to fair compensation.

My colleagues have pointed this out already: Why in heaven's name would this government take out the word "fair" in the preamble of the bill that talks about the purposes, where it talks now about injured workers having the right to "fair compensation." What is it that we are supposed to read into the removal of that word, if not that the concept of fair compensation has gone out the window?

When you put that together with the fact that benefits are being cut now to 85% rather than 90% of the pre-employment earnings, when you put that together with the fact that the appeal rights that injured workers will have will now be less than what they had before, when you put that together with the fact that \$15 billion is being taken out of the pockets of injured workers and put into the pockets of employers, when you put that together with the fact that the premise upon which this whole legislation has come in front of us is that there is a major funding crisis in the unfunded liability that the government believes needs to be addressed and yet the money they are recouping from the system is not going entirely towards the unfunded liability, what are we left to believe? More important, what are injured workers left to believe?

It's what we've heard so far and, quite frankly, I say to the government members, it's what you're going to hear in spades when you take this bill out to committee over the summer months. It is that what you are doing here is fundamentally wrong, that what you are doing here is attacking a group of people who should get the utmost of our respect and our support. It is that you are attacking once again a group of people that is among the most vulnerable in our society. It is again that what you are doing is fundamentally wrong and fundamentally contrary to the basic tenets of good government. It is that you are continuing here again to shift the balance of power and the balance of economic might from the hands of the average citizen into the hands of those who are already well off.

It is, in short, that what this government is doing is continuing an agenda which hurts people, continuing an agenda which we have seen through piece of legislation after piece of legislation is going to dismantle every major area of public policy that we have built up in this province through past governments of all political stripes, and it is leading to a situation in which we will have a leaner and certainly much meaner society.

When I look outside of the particular pieces of what this bill does, that is what I find the most frightening and the most offensive. Here what we are seeing is just another example. It's another group of people who are being attacked by this government, and this one they can't even say is related to the tax cut, because while the

other ones they can connect back to the public coffers, this one they cannot.

That is what I find, again, the most frightening in this one. Philosophically, we know how it's connected. Philosophically, it's because, as I've said, this government is more intent on pleasing its friends, on putting more power and more resources and more money into the hands of fewer and fewer Ontarians, taking that away from the rest of us. But in the process they are going to make all of us poorer, because when we lose those basic protections that we have today for injured workers, when we lose good services that we have built up in our education system, when we lose good services in our health care system, when we lose piece after piece, those things that together make up the good society that makes us the envy of the world, then we will certainly know who we can look to to blame for that. But beyond the blame, when we lose all of those things, then I believe that as a society we are all the poorer for it. What that means at the end of the day is that it's going to take years to be able to recoup the damage that this government will have done.

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One of the things that I do know and that I do see is that while they will get away with making some of these changes today, they are not managing to get away with putting them through without people noticing. In fact we are seeing, whether it's on workers' compensation, on education, on health care, on social services, more and more people understanding more and more clearly what this government's agenda is all about, what the Mike Harris revolution is all about. What we are seeing, slowly but surely, is the counterrevolution beginning in a way that says that people want to protect the basic services that make Ontario still a good place to live in and that people are prepared to fight to ensure that this government, if it doesn't come to its senses, is certainly defeated and not allowed to continue on this course of action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I appreciate the opportunity to say a couple of words in response to our colleague opposite who spent about the first 12 minutes of his 30 minutes saying that in fact he agreed that there was a problem and taking the next 18 to suggest that we didn't. That's somewhat remarkable to do that in the same speech. He commented near the end that he thought people were starting to notice. I would say to him, they did notice and they acted appropriately on June 8, 1995.

Let's deal with some of the specifics: The NDP record on occupational health and safety. They reduced the number of health and safety inspector positions by almost 8%. They cut the Ministry of Labour by \$63 million, more than one third in their five-year term. They eliminated 351 positions in total. Just in the last three years of their mandate, they cut Ministry of Labour inspections by 25%. The number of field visits declined by 20%. Ministry of Labour orders in response to what they saw out there in the workplace declined also by 20%, from 51,000 down to 39,000. That's what their commitment to health and safety was. That's the facts, not the rhetoric.

It's easy to stand in this chamber and any one of us can simply try and rewrite history, but the hard facts, the numbers from your term, sir, speak a very different story. They tell the tale and the tale is that under your five-year term you had a chance to improve health and safety in this province and you chose not to do that. You chose to be parsimonious, you chose to save every penny you could and instead put it into other woolly ideas that also didn't do much good for this economy.

The fact of the matter is, we have refocused the ministry, we have refocused the vision of our commitment to health and safety. We're acting on that challenge and we're acting on our promises before the election.

Mr Patten: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Dovercourt. There are several points he made that I thought were worthy of response. One in particular was that he confirmed that we all acknowledge that there need to be some changes at WCB, as has happened over the years where the evolution of labour support and labour benefits to injured employees and workers has continued to take place.

He also addressed some of the first principles of WCB, the one of fairness in particular and the issue of no-fault, and I'd like to elaborate on that. I think that's a very important issue because what he alluded to was that in fact that may be in jeopardy, that this may have an adverse effect on the employers, not the employees. He related this to the appeals process, which I concur with, in that if you do not allow an effective appeals process that is perceived to be fair, then what you do is you drive injured workers back into litigation, you drive workers who will go to court. It places that whole area in jeopardy. I hope during the hearings when testimony takes place to demonstrate this particular point that the government will seriously listen.

Of course, his final address is, who benefits overall? Where is the balance? A term that I like to use is that the approach is like one of an anti-Robin Hood, another example of taking from the poor and making sure that the rich benefit, because you're taking \$6 billion from the injured employees and giving that to the employers. His point of saying where is that money to go — why didn't it go to the unfunded liability as it should have?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to my colleague from Dovercourt's speech this afternoon. In his always effective way he has carefully laid out the fact that this government's Bill 99 hurts workers, helps their friends. That's why the response from the Tory back benches is to try to fudge the issue.

I think it's important to say that part of what my colleague from Dovercourt was stating was that any day of the week we will ask injured workers whether they believe Elizabeth Witmer and the Tories care more about health and safety or care more about WCB than Bob Mackenzie and the New Democrats. We'll have that debate with injured workers publicly any time anyone in the government back benches is foolish enough to attempt to do so.

Let's look carefully at what the member for Dovercourt said. He talked about the fact that this a phoney, manufactured crisis in WCB, as this government has done in education. That is the fact. The unfunded liability, the

member for Dovercourt said it's preposterous to talk about this in terms of money that's owed immediately, and it is. It's no different than saying that every family out there owes the following amount: take all the mortgage or rent that you'll pay from now till you die, take all of the heat and hydro that you'll pay for that facility from now until you die, all of the insurance, all of the maintenance, add it all up, and if you don't have enough money to cut a cheque for that total amount, then you're in crisis. Using that kind of formula, I would think that there's not a working person or a middle-class family in the entire province that isn't broke and in crisis by that funding formula. It makes no sense.

Mr Maves: I appreciate the member for Dovercourt's contribution to the debate; I always do. I find him one of the most reasonable members of the opposition benches. On a personal note, I was hopeful for him in the leadership race. I was sorry that it didn't turn out in his favour.

One thing he did mention, though, he talked about vocational rehabilitation and that the services were being reduced at WCB, but I should remind him, if he doesn't know or if he doesn't remember, that over 70% of voc rehab services at the WCB are already performed by external providers to the WCB. They do a very good job, and I believe they'll continue to do a good job.

He also questioned the WCB and the bill's commitment to return to work by saying it's nothing more than words. But he should know that it's the intention, I believe, of the WCB to hire about 300 nurse-practitioners to eventually help implement the return-to-work program. That's a serious commitment by WCB to workers to getting them back to work.

He also said that the unfunded liability problem, which he admitted initially that we had, when he was in office came down and is coming down still due to Bill 165. But in actuality, the unfunded liability was about \$30 billion when his government was in office and the one-time reduction in the unfunded liability occurred under his government and it went, as they say, from \$18 billion to \$12 billion.

But that's it. Anything that has happened since then to reduce the unfunded liability has come because of two things: a growing economy, more jobs and therefore more premiums are coming in; lower injuries, so less money is going out. That's number one. The other thing is that the Workers' Compensation Board investment portfolio, as a result of better management, is bringing in more money and that's what's been causing — after the 1994 one-time reduction in the unfunded liability from Bill 165 was realized. Since then, it's all because of better management of the investment portfolio and growth in the economy.

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The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired. The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: I appreciate the comments from all sides. If nothing else, it shows that some people were listening to some of the things I said, and that's always a bit of a compliment in some ways.

Interjections.

Mr Silipo: I really do, because I think this exchange is one of the few places we have left here to at least understand how we each think and how we approach

particular problems, and obviously, there are significant differences in how we look at this problem.

As my colleague from Hamilton Centre said, I would say to the government members opposite in particular that I would be just quite happy to put our own record as a government on health and safety issues against that of any other government in this province, and certainly that of this government. I could say to the members opposite that if they were so concerned about the cuts, as they put it, to the inspectors, why did they not reinstitute some of those positions? I didn't see them doing any of that.

Beyond that, because there is lots I could give in reply if I had more time, I just say to him that some of those woolly ideas that he mentioned were in fact trying to find money to sustain things like such woolly ideas as our health care system, our social assistance system, our school system and our workers' compensation system. I would say that none of us is, quite frankly, perfect on the question of workers' compensation. I'm not claiming we resolved the problem; we knew we didn't resolve all the problems. That's why we set up the royal commission, which the government then shut down two thirds of the way through, before they finished their work. Then they have the audacity, as one member did earlier, to stand up and say, "The commission didn't come up with anything." Of course not. They shut it down.

I think the question is: At the end of the day, where is the balance? We believe the balance needs to be to ensure that there is fair compensation to injured workers for the injuries they sustain on the job, and yes, reasonable efforts to help them get back to work. That's how we would cut it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I am pleased to support this bill today. Everyone knows that reforms to the workers' compensation system are long overdue. The system is dysfunctional, that we know. It's not working the way it was intended, and the unfunded liability of \$10.9 billion, nearly \$11 billion, is totally unacceptable. It's an unfunded liability that if left unchecked would grow to \$18 billion by the year 2014.

In my riding of Kitchener, owners of small and medium-sized businesses have told me their WCB assessments are much too high. Given the enormous unfunded liability that must be addressed, they are concerned that this will affect their ability to hire new workers and maintain existing jobs. That's what our government is trying to do, help small and medium-sized and large-sized businesses create jobs.

In many cases, we know that the unfunded liability has affected business's abilities to create jobs. I have met with one business in my constituency, a very large business, and this is a file of the correspondence. It's a business that has been a long-time Kitchener business. It provided over 1,000 jobs until recently. They have recently laid off 400 people.

The meetings I've had with that business indicate that over the last five years of operation they have paid in premiums or assessments an amount in excess of their profit. Their lifetime assessments are \$79 million, their lifetime WCB costs or claims are \$29 million. They received rebates of \$10 million, meaning that they have

contributed a surplus of \$40 million to WCB. In 1995, this company only had claims of \$800,000, while they had assessments of \$6.5 million. This company is laying off employees in order to reduce its costs, costs which are going to the unfunded liability of the WCB. One third of their WCB assessments is going to this unfunded liability.

The member for Hamilton Centre a week ago said: "When we talk about the unfunded liability and point this out, we need to remind people that this is not a taxpayer debt; this is not a taxpayer-funded account. It's all paid and owed by the corporations...." That's right. That's my point. It's all paid for by the corporations, at the expense of jobs.

The member for Dovercourt says the unfunded liability is not a crisis. When in the devil does the liability become a crisis? Is \$10.9 billion not a crisis? It's time to face reality. If the WCB had no unfunded liability, employers would pay on average about 30% less than they do now. The unfunded liability has led to a situation where currently for each new employee, an employer must assume a share of the unfunded liability equal to about \$4,000. That's not exactly conducive to creating new employment in the province of Ontario.

Both the Liberals and the NDP have been only too eager to point out the failings of the present system, and yet in typical fashion, when they had the opportunity, they did nothing. We intend to address those failings with innovative solutions and with compassion for workers. I know that the members of the third party are going to say, "What compassion?" so let me point it out.

There will be new return-to-work obligations. Employers will be required to take steps to ensure the early and safe return of their injured workers to work, including obligations to contact the worker as soon as possible after an injury and to maintain contact. The employers must attempt to identify and arrange suitable employment that is consistent with the worker's functional abilities and restores the worker's pre-injury earnings, and the employers must cooperate in return-to-work measures required by the board.

As I've said earlier, the problems with WCB are far-ranging and very serious for workers and employers alike. An unfunded liability of \$10.9 billion, the largest in Canada, and assessment rates that are 32% to 40% higher than any other province or bordering state, with which we compete for businesses and jobs, obviously have a detrimental effect on business and employment.

What concerns me even more, however, is the irresponsible lack of focus we have had on effective health and safety and return-to-work plans for workers. This is the legacy we've been given from the Liberals and the NDP. I am proud to say that our government will continue to deliver on the critical need for reform.

There are many positive aspects to Bill 99. Addressing the funding challenges is among the most important, but today I would like to focus on what I see as the core of this proposal: making workplaces safer so that injuries are avoided in the first place.

Study after study in the health care field has shown that if you can reduce the factors that cause poor health, it is there that you will find the greatest gains in improvement. It is no less true of workplace health and safety.

This legislation will give the WCB the mandate to prevent workplace injury and illness, and to promote workplace health and safety. It will encourage employers and employees to work together to make health and safety a top priority. I'd like to repeat that. It will encourage employers and employees to work together to make health and safety a top priority, and it will initiate a system to measure and monitor health and safety initiatives and their performance. That is in keeping with what we know about improving public health.

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These ambitious goals will be accomplished through a coordinated strategy designed to integrate Ontario's complex health and safety system. Under the new legislation, the WCB will be responsible for educating employees, educating employers and the public, developing standards for occupational health and safety certification, funding, overseeing and setting standards for the network of health and safety agencies, and increasing the financial incentive for employers and employees to invest in research into prevention and early return-to-work programs. These new measures will ensure everyone has the tools they need to eliminate workplace hazards and to achieve optimum health and safety performance.

I must say this comprehensive concern for worker health and safety is typical of legislation we have seen coming out of the Ministry of Labour. It is well-thought-out, it is thorough and focused on specific actions to improve our working environment. As I've often heard it said, knowledge is power, but action is real power, and this bill is action. The minister is to be commended for what is yet another excellent piece of legislation.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, God. Did they tell you to say that, Wayne?

Mr Wettlaufer: It's interesting, is it not, that I woke up the members of the opposition parties. But it's also interesting that many of these reforms are recommended by the 1996 annual report of the Provincial Auditor. In fact, in some cases these go beyond what the auditor has recommended. That underlines the commitment of this government to not only address the very serious unfunded liability issues now facing the WCB, but to focus on workplace health and safety concerns. It shows real leadership in making Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world.

I'd like to read parts of a couple of editorials here, one from the Windsor Star in December 9, 1996. It says:

"As expected, opposition members and labour groups have come out swinging against proposed changes to the Workers' Compensation Board. Yet they have no real reason to challenge Labour Minister Elizabeth Witmer, who has undertaken the first real reforms of the WCB in more than 80 years.

"Clearly the time has come for change, and clearly the system is dysfunctional."

The Hamilton Spectator, December 4, 1996, said:

"Some difficult but necessary surgery to Ontario's debt-riddled workers' compensation system is being undertaken by Labour Minister Elizabeth Witmer. When the critically ill patient emerges from the recovery room, Ontario should have an entity that's in better financial health and a positive factor in attracting investment in jobs."

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Hamilton, you say?

Mr Wettlaufer: From the Hamilton Spectator.

"At a time when there is a desperate need for more jobs and investment, Ms Witmer's reforms are a step along the road to recovery."

I am very pleased to support the bill today. Public opinion is in support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Miclash: What the member did not touch on is the fact that we have a restructuring and reduction in the powers of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, or WCAT, as it's well known. As I indicated in my comments earlier, this is an area where injured workers truly need help. In essence, what's happening here is they're taking away the very last resort of the injured workers, the last place the injured worker would go to get help in terms of his claim and the problems he would be having with the bureaucracy.

As well, in this legislation we're seeing cuts to the office of the worker adviser and the office of the employer adviser. I spoke earlier about the number of injured workers we all, in all three parties, have in our offices on a regular basis for many cases. The cuts in both these areas will be of no assistance to those in most need.

The worker adviser office is being cut by 30%. I go back to that injured worker who was always looking for help. As we've indicated earlier, the committee is going to be travelling with Bill 99 throughout this province. They will listen to some of the injured workers, to some of the people who have had these problems. Hopefully, they will come back and report back to the minister, who seems to be so intent on working against the wishes of the workers, whether they be the worker in the province or the injured worker. As I've said in the past, it's my hope that after that committee goes throughout the province and listens carefully, it will report back on changes that will be needed to this piece of legislation.

Mr Christopherson: I didn't think any member of the government back benches could possibly pucker up enough to say the things he did in that speech about previous labour legislation in terms of how wonderful it is for workers and how grateful they are to see this wonderful labour minister bring out her agenda. I'd like to see that speech being reread in front of his constituents, particularly injured workers in the city of Kitchener, because that would be a moment to behold as he tries to pawn that off as anything working people would believe.

There's so much. It's a shame there's only two minutes to respond. First of all, the editorials being read, let's make it clear in this case editors are managers. They're part of the management team. They reflect the views of the publisher, and more and more, unfortunately, we think they reflect the views of the owners. Of course they love this. It cuts their costs by 5%. Does anyone believe it would be bad news for a management team to hear its labour costs have been cut by 5%? Because that's the only, as the member for Kitchener talks about, "many positive aspects of this bill that exist." They're all for the employer, so of course they're happy with it. I suggest their objectivity in this case leaves much to be desired.

He talks about the unfunded liability and the fact we did nothing. Not the case. We brought in reform that lowered the unfunded liability every year over the last three years, cut it back by over \$1 billion. We gave \$200 a month more to almost 45,000 injured workers. This government has not done one thing that helps injured workers in Bill 99.

Mr Maves: This government is maintaining that \$200 payment to those over 40,000 workers, it should be noted. I want to thank the member for Kitchener for his contribution to this debate. He speaks with great passion. I think bringing in some third-party support, when he talked about the Windsor Star and he talked about the Provincial Auditor, is a very important element that's been left out of this debate so far. I thank him for that contribution.

If I could go further with some third-party endorsement of Bill 99, the Hamilton paper said: "The necessity of making workers' compensation more affordable and efficient could not be ignored by the Conservatives. The unfunded liability of the board...stands at \$10.7 billion. Exceeding the combined unfunded liabilities of all provinces, the shortfall must be addressed if the system is to have a sustainable future."

They also went on to say, "There will be some loss of benefits for injured workers, although the size of the reductions is not as brutal as made out by opposition critics."

Mr Christopherson: Why did you cut premiums 5%, then?

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr Maves: "Benefit levels would be cut from 90% to 85% of a worker's net pay, consistent with trends in other provinces such as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick."

"The Conservatives, in tune with the example of none other than the previous New Democratic government, will further reduce indexing of benefits to inflation. Full inflation protection, however, will be retained for workers who are 100% disabled and the survivors of deceased workers."

I think it's important, and I appreciate the member for Kitchener bringing in third-party endorsement. I thought it was pertinent that we continue to add to that, and I thank him for his contribution today.

1720

Mr Patten: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the member for Kitchener. It seems that the overwhelming issue the government is concerned about is the unfunded liability issue as they perceive it. I think the information, the analysis that has been presented time and time again by the opposition continues to show that it is not the kind of crisis the government pretends to make it out to be. As the member for Dovercourt suggested, and I thought it was a good suggestion, if they were so concerned with the unfunded liability as they perceive it, why did they not take the \$6 billion they've taken away from pensions and benefits from the workers who are injured, and place it, and they would not have to worry about it?

Not only that, but the strategy; they've done this many, many times and had to backtrack on many pieces of leg-

islation, by starting with a dollar figure and then trying to make adjustments to be in line with that dollar figure.

We talk about, "Well, this is going to help employers." I agree: We should help employers, we should support employment, we should support a very active economy. But when we look at the job situation the government is so worried about, by giving much money to the rich, the people in the poorer, lower-income levels are suffering and having to carry most of the burden of these changes. When we look at jobs created, this government is behind in their schedule, right now, 147,000 jobs. How many jobs is this going to create, the kind of money you're talking about taking off of injured workers? We know it's not only in the interests of the workers, it's in the interests of the employers, it's in the interests of everybody to see that justice is done and fairness is done and that we have people who are able to live with a high degree of dignity.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener, you have two minutes.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'd like to thank all the members, from Kenora, Hamilton Centre, Ottawa Centre and Niagara Falls. The member for Kenora talked about the workers' advisory office being cut by 30%. It's not a matter of who we cut; it's a matter of ensuring that the maximum benefits go to the injured workers.

Injured workers come to my office as well. They aren't as concerned about their benefits as they are about getting back to work. That is what part of this legislation is all about: labour-market re-entry, to ensure they get back to work.

The member for Hamilton Centre said the newspapers reflect the opinions of their owners. Let me tell the member for Hamilton Centre that newspapers reflect the opinions of their readers as well.

The unfunded liability was addressed, he says, in their administration. It was addressed, all right: on the backs of the companies that could no longer afford to hire workers. How is that addressing it?

I think this legislation speaks for itself. It is good legislation. It will ensure that we are back in a competitive marketplace with the bordering states and provinces of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'd like to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 99 to just raise a couple of concerns that have been brought to my attention in eastern Ontario. In recent weeks I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of injured workers, a number of employers and, interestingly, the other day a group of administrators of long-term-care institutions who were raising, actually, a concern that surprised me about their workers' compensation rates. These are people who are struggling to meet important community needs in the area of long-term care at the institutional level.

I was surprised to hear this group of administrators from Renfrew county telling me, when I asked the question, "Is there anything I should know about your current situation beyond what we've discussed in previous meetings about funding levels etc?" they said, "Yes, if you get an opportunity at the Legislature, please tell

your colleagues that we are concerned about sharply increasing workers' compensation rates."

They made the point that in the current environment, with funding that is not increasing — in some cases, some of these institutions are facing very real downward pressure, real cuts, I guess I should say, in terms of their provincial government funding. I was surprised and concerned to have those administrators tell me that workers' compensation costs were rising significantly and there was no obvious place where those additional premium costs could be funded.

I thought I would use the opportunity today to simply say to the government, on behalf of long-term-care administrators in my part of eastern Ontario and Renfrew county specifically, there is a very real issue in 1997 about the fact that in that part of the public sector, institutional long-term care, one of the real cost pressures these institutions are facing in communities like Renfrew, Arnprior, Barry's Bay and Deep River is WCB premium rate increases that are sharply upward. This is not something that has been done by the previous NDP government or the previous Conservative or Liberal government; this is something that has been done in just the very last little while under the current provincial government led by Mr Harris from North Bay.

As I say, I was surprised to find out that the increases were as sharp as they were and just simply wanted to say to the government that the administrators are struggling and were very concerned about where they were going to find the resources to pay for the premium increases they were facing.

In recent weeks — and I want to be fair about this — a number of employers across the region are pleased to see some of their costs moderating. The Conservative Party, as I recall, in the electoral campaign of two years ago, said that if elected they were going to reduce the premium costs to employers generally. Obviously part of that commitment is at the core of Bill 99.

I haven't had a chance to look at the data specifically, but it's obvious from the previous example I cited that not all employers are experiencing the same reductions. I would have thought, I say to the member for Perth, that if anybody was going to get a break these days it would be long-term-care institutions.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It's experience rating.

Mr Conway: Well, it's experience rating, that may be, but the offering was a 5% reduction. Of course, like most things in life, the devil is in the details, and I guess the devil has been busy in these details.

Mr Bert Johnson: The devil is in Renfrew, not in Perth.

Mr Conway: Oh, the devil, he says, is in Renfrew, not in Perth. We once had a leader from Perth who had a wonderful name.

Mr Beaubien: What was his name?

Mr Conway: Wellington Hay.

Mr Beaubien: It's a nice name.

Mr Conway: Well, Howard Ferguson, the then leader of the Conservative Party, said, "Nice man, but it was a case of too much Hay and not enough Wellington."

But as I look at Bill 99 I'm asked to contemplate change. There is certainly some change in this bill, but

the government's compensation policy is not changed totally. One of the interesting things about the Workers' Compensation Board — and the Harris crowd, I'm sure, said: "Well, elect us. With those New Democrats and even the Liberals, there'd be politics at the WCB."

What did I see a few weeks or a few months after the new government was sworn in by Her Majesty's local representative in the summer of 1995 but one of the most familiar patterns in 20th century Ontario politics and government. In this case, "What's the pattern?" you might ask, my friend from Perth. Well, if you win government, you find a good friend of the government, usually a close friend of the leader of the government, and you put him or her in charge of the Workers' Compensation Board.

The revolutionaries that took office in Ontario in June 1995 carried on a good and honourable tradition. Those incompetent Peterson Liberals, they were so confused that when they had the opportunity, they appointed a former Tory labour minister, Bob Elgie, MD, to be their chairperson at Ontario Hydro — I mean the Workers' Compensation Board. Not Mike Harris: No, no, Mike was too smart for that. He wasn't going to be putting any friend of Bob Rae's or any Peterson cabinet person in that —

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): You were looking for the job?

Mr Conway: I certainly was not looking for the job. I want to say to the top cop from Brockville that it would be a scandal of monumental proportions to assign someone like me to a job that important and that managerial. 1730

But what do we find? Some fellow named Glen Wright from Waterloo, described in the public press as "a fishing buddy" of Premier Harris, is newly appointed to the six-digit figure as chairman of the Ontario Hydro — of the Workers' Compensation Board. I keep mixing up Wright and Farlinger. That was another appointment. You see, unlike some of these oppositionists, I'm not going to complain.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): They're competent people.

Mr Conway: I tell you, one thing about Mr Wright at the Workers' Compensation Board is that he is very interested in and concerned about the interior design of his new office. The government may bring to the assembly Bill 99 to reduce the pensions of injured workers and to shut down certain offices that my friend from Hamilton Centre was talking about, I thought with some eloquence and passion, the other day. But I'll tell you, Glen Wright knows what comes first, and \$70,000 worth of office renovations come first for the new chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board. I just thought I'd use the debate this afternoon to remind people.

I heard the previous speaker from Kitchener getting very exercised, as he ought to, about: "We've got to get this economy going again. We've got to do something about costs. We've got to lead by example." Well, what does Mr Wright do over at the chairman's office? Spends 70,000 bucks that, according to my friend Wettlaufer, we don't have, to decorate his office. What do they think about that up in Wellington county, I say to young

Arnott. I suspect they'd agree with me and anybody else here.

I can imagine Mike Harris and Turnbull, that wonderful Thatcherite — I guess there's still one left. A few years ago, Bob Rae or Peterson or Davis, if they'd even — the bloody paint would have peeled off the ceiling. Bad enough that you appoint a fishing buddy to the chairmanship of the WCB — revolutions don't change everything, I see — but then the first thing he does is he goes and spends 70,000 bucks Wettlaufer tells us we don't have to redecorate his office. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Mr Gilchrist: Or something like that.

Mr Conway: Or something like that. The member from Canadian Tire is here, and I'm happy he's here. I read in the weekend press that the member from Canadian Tire —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. You know you can't say that.

Mr Conway: I can't say that. Well, I say it again. He was reminding us, was our friend from Scarborough East, the other day, that he owned property in Northumberland. I was going to say at the time, all you have to do is read the front page of the Cobourg Daily Star to know that. I watch with some interest the activities of our friend from Scarborough in the public press. On the weekend I see that of course he and the reverend member for High Park-Swansea have embraced the federal Tory campaign in a significant way.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I may be wrong, actually. I can't believe that Gilchrist would be mixed up with that pinko Charest from Canada east. We've got real red meat there in Scarborough East. He's in Medicine Hat and Taber and Cardston, Alberta. That's where his true home is. Shea probably does understand something about the moderate conservatism of the member of Parliament from Sherbrooke. But I'm off track, Mr Speaker.

Oh, I know. I was simply saying that I thought the previous speaker from Kitchener made a compelling argument about the need for tough decisions and prudence and economy in public expenditures, including those of the Workers' Compensation Board.

I want to say rhetorically to Mr Wright, wherever you are, on behalf of my constituents, I noticed the measure of your prudence when it came to allocating scarce resources for the internal appointments of your office.

Mr Bert Johnson: My wife thinks I'm Mr Right.

Mr Conway: The member for Perth says that his wife thinks he's Mr Right. Who am I to say that your wife, Bert, is anything but an astute observer of humankind?

But I say in all seriousness to my revolutionary friends on the treasury bench that we get the Premier's fishing buddy appointed to a very important job, and the first job, apparently, of Mr Wright of Waterloo is to get the right kind of new office with the right appointments. Having done all that, we're called here to the Legislative Assembly and told by Mr Wettlaufer and others that we have to pass Bill 99, we have to reduce the benefits to injured workers and we have to make other refinements, because without it, Ontario's economic future is going to be compromised.

Let me say that I recognize, as I hope all members do, that the workers' compensation system continues to be a troubled one. I've been a member of this Legislature for 22 years, through administrations of all stripes. I've got to tell you, there are days when I really wonder whether J.P. Whitney did us a favour a long time ago in the early years of Progressive Conservatism in giving us the Workers' Compensation Board. Like most members, I spend a considerable amount of my time listening to tragic stories of injured workers and their families, about their being caught in the impenetrable net, the mesh that is the WCB. We're all responsible for that, and the costs are quite high; I recognize that. The administration costs at the Workers' Compensation Board have been too high for too long, and I understand not just the view of injured workers but of employers, small and medium-sized, in my constituency who feel that they are shouldering an unfair burden.

I've been in the United States a couple of times in recent years and I've been struck by some of the advertisements that I've seen from fast-talking lawyers and certain kinds of private insurance entrepreneurs who are talking about various schemes available in certain parts of the US where I gather they don't have our kind of workers' compensation. I know there are many, myself included on occasion, as I said a moment ago, who come to the conclusion that maybe we should just scrap the whole deal and give injured workers the right to sue.

A lot of people who think this compensation system is an undue burden on our mixed economy would perhaps do well to go to some other parts of the developed world and listen to business people particularly complain. I was in Texas where I was listening in recent times to a number of small business operators who would do anything to escape the clutches of certain of the legal talents in Texas who are driving them into bankruptcy. For those in the Legislature and elsewhere who say, "Maybe we should try a different system," I simply want to refer to certain American jurisdictions where the right to sue appears to be more available than it is here in Canada. Listening to small business groups and their representatives, I certainly don't get any sense that that's a panacea either.

I want to say as well that injured workers have relatively few advocates. I see cases in my constituency of genuine hardship. One of the worst I have ever seen, quite frankly, was a middle-aged man who was battling terminal cancer at his workplace, which happens to have been the national research laboratory at Atomic Energy of Canada, where the employer stated for months and years that there could be no connection between the illness that eventually killed this constituent and the workplace. The fight that worker had, that his family had, that some of the rest of us had trying to get some redress, was a fight I will not ever forget.

You know, there is a sense in the land today that insurance schemes like workers' compensation are just somehow abused endlessly, and let's be frank, largely abused by the workers. That's the attitude of altogether too many people, in my view, people who forget what we require under our workers' compensation legislation, that is, the forfeiture of the right to sue and in its place an

elaborate and sometimes, oftentimes, a very complicated system of adjudicating disabilities, permanent and partial. 1740

It concerns me, in Ontario in the 1990s, that there is a rhetoric around, much of it advanced by right-wing think tanks, that we have all these shirkers out there who are just ripping off insurance systems of one kind or another. I remember certainly the last election campaign; you know, that hot button of welfare. It was essentially, "Get the bums off the public rolls." I remember it well, and who can quarrel with its success?

I was just thinking about that today as I read the American financial pages: "Canadians — The Bre-X Scam. World-Class Scam, Pretty Sharp Operators."

Mr Gilchrist: And where were the federal Liberals in all of that?

Mr Conway: The redoubtable member from Scarborough Canadian Tire says, "And where were the federal Liberals in all of that?" Does Mr Martin have the responsibility for the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission? I don't think so.

My only point in raising this issue today is, will I hear before this session is over one syllable of concern and complaint from that highly individualistic right wing about the ripoff that went on at Bre-X? I suspect not. I won't hear a peep about the scam the Wall Street Journal and Barron's and other American-based financial media are reporting to the world today. If you haven't seen it, go and read it.

Certainly the current government is very rightly concerned about creating a good environment for business and investor confidence. Read the Wall Street Journal today. Boy, I haven't checked what kind of day the TSE has had. I am sure it has not been a very regular day and I can just imagine the calls the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission are getting and are going to get.

You want to talk about ripoff artists and scam artists? I guess tens of thousands of investors, who ought to have been aware, I suppose, and more prudent than many were certainly, have been taken to the cleaners big time. But I don't think I'm going to hear very much in this place about that scam because we're too busy trying to track down some injured worker. We're too busy trying to deal with some welfare fraud. Let me be very frank: If there is fraud or abuse, whether consumer or provider, let it be dealt with vigorously but let it be dealt with fairly.

My concern about issues like Bill 99 is that there is too much focus on cutting back the benefits of some of the least well-off people in our community today. I'd like to say to the government that yes, we have to be vigilant about our costs, but on the other hand, we also have to be vigilant about the deal we made with workers' compensation almost a century ago. We promised the working men and women of this province that if they gave up their right to sue employers, who were responsible for workplaces that may have caused serious injury, the deal we made was that there would be fair and adequate compensation for those men and women who were injured in the workplace, and I'm not at all sure that in 1997 very many people in this place remember what that deal required us to provide.

I say, in conclusion, that there are a number of people in Renfrew county, injured workers, young, middle-aged, and unfortunately, a number of older workers, who look at this policy and worry that the deal they thought they were part of is increasingly skewed to their disadvantage. I hope that's not the case, and I'm going to be very interested to pursue this debate, particularly through the public hearings stage, to satisfy myself that this workers' compensation arrangement, the new deal, the fair deal that was offered a long time ago, can honestly be said to be at least a fair deal for working men and women at the end of the century as it was throughout much of the 20th century.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: Always, regardless of the issue and regardless of whether I even agree with the speaker, to listen to the member for Renfrew North is to enjoy this place at its finest. The willingness to put a great deal of effort into historical significance, I think we all learn from that, the witticisms, the barbs back and forth. It's a very impressive presentation from a very effective speaker, and I always enjoy listening to the member for Renfrew North.

I'd like to underscore his comments. I thought he made a number of excellent points that have not yet been raised, at least not during this second reading debate, and one is the fact that the government is very much focused on going after the most vulnerable, because they know what the public hot buttons are. He talks about the fact that the Bre-X scam is not going to get near the attention by this government or by any member of the government in any public way as would any isolated case of fraud that they could find in any government system. I think that's fascinating. It's an excellent point to make, because it's the truth. I'll fall off this chair if the Minister of Finance announces a public inquiry into what happened in Bre-X, how we could have prevented it and who is to blame. It's not going to happen, because that's not where their focus is.

I was particularly impressed by the fact that the member pointed out, and I think he spoke for all of us when he said, if there's fraud anywhere, it ought to be dealt with properly, effectively but fairly. He emphasized the word "fairly," and I want to end my comments by pointing out once again that "fair" is a word that this government is taking out of workers' comp legislation. Compensation will no longer be fair.

Mr Bert Johnson: I would like to reply to the debate entered into by the member for Renfrew North. Indeed it's a pleasure listening to an orator, something that may have been lost away back in the days of Gladstone and Disraeli and people who spoke with that kind of passion and that kind of ability.

I would like to point out, though, that when he speaks of wanting to be fair in his comments, I get a little bit of feeling similar to the patient when the doctor says, "This isn't going to hurt." But he does bring his comments into the workers' compensation line, he did speak towards the bill, and indeed it is a pleasure listening to someone with his ability speak.

I have absolutely no idea of the political background of Mr Wright, but I do know that in the fourth-quarter

report, and I would like to quote: "Administrative and other expenses decreased by \$18 million in 1996. This decrease was the direct result of management initiatives to control salary and other administrative costs." I think we shouldn't overlook this opportunity to compliment the head of the Workers' Compensation Board on the good work he's doing. I just wanted to add those comments about the debate to those from the member for Renfrew North.

1750

Mr Patten: It's always a pleasure to hear my colleague from Renfrew North speak. He brings a certain flair, a certain nimbleness and a sense of enjoyment in the very language he uses, and I'm always pleased to hear him.

I thought he made two points. One was already mentioned by the member for Hamilton Centre, which I think is a good one, and that is, if we're going to go after abusers, let's make sure we go after the abusers that are in all systems. The people who abuse any particular system should be routed out, should be corrected, and there should be systems in there in order to deal with it fairly.

On that particular score, it would seem to me that when we look at — I know we have 1-800 numbers for people to deal with welfare cases and I know we have ways to tell on people who abuse systems. It would perhaps be interesting to have a 1-800 number for those who don't follow through with their WCB premiums — well, we probably know that — or for those businesses that are involved in not having paid their provincial taxes.

The member for Renfrew North identified something I think is really important, and it has been addressed obliquely in a variety of areas, that is, the alternatives to the system we have right now, which of course has always been in evolution and hopefully is heading for continual improvement, but there are things to worry about. The alternative to not having a no-fault system — we've identified a number of times in the opposition that we believe the no-fault system has some leaks in it and it may be susceptible to pushing people into litigation, which would undercut one of the very important foundations of this whole compensation program for injured workers in the first place.

Mr Bisson: It's always a pleasure to listen to the comments from the member for Renfrew North. He asked the question somewhere at the beginning of his speech which is the question that always has to be asked whenever we're debating legislation in this House, and that is, what is this legislation all about? What drives the agenda of the government or what drives the government to introduce such a piece of legislation as Bill 99?

I think we can come to a fairly simple conclusion: This is about the government saying: "We think that workers are getting too good a deal in the workers' compensation system today and we think employers are paying too high a premium. We will penalize the workers and lessen their benefits and we will reward the employers and lower their premiums."

Let's talk about what this is really all about. It's about reducing the amount of assessment to employers that results in about a \$5-billion saving to employers across

this province, and then consequently, on the other side, reducing the benefits of injured workers, which will equal about \$15 billion. That's what this is all about. The government has picked sides once again. The government has said, "We are on the side of big business and we are not necessarily on the side of workers and individuals."

I think the comment that the member from Renfrew makes about Bre-X is an excellent comment, and the member for Hamilton Centre said it yet again: Where is the government? Where is the voice of the government? Where is the power of the government? Where is the initiative by this government to try to do something about the thousands of investors who have lost billions of dollars on the Bre-X scam?

I come from the community of Timmins, a mining community. I could list you names — I wouldn't do it in this Legislature — of people who have literally lost their life's savings because of a scam on the part of a mining operator who was trying to operate a scam in Indonesia in which people invested. Where is the government on that one? They have picked to penalize workers —

The Speaker: Thank you. Response, the member for Renfrew North.

Mr Conway: I want to say a couple of things. I can't believe that the distinguished member for Perth wouldn't know that Mr Glen Wright is a fishing pal of his illustrious chef, the member for Nipissing.

Mr Gilchrist: He did give away fridges.

Mr Conway: The member from Scarborough Canadian Tire talks about giving away fridges. Oh boy, I'm amazed that even you would be that reckless, but I will be careful. Oh, Stevie, some ice is a lot thinner than others, and even I will resist the temptation to push you through the thinnest ice of all.

To get a lecture about public morality from Harry Danford I will take, I deserve, but to get a lecture on public morality from the member for Scarborough East is stretching credibility and credulity to the breaking point. But I will resist the temptation. Trust me.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Glass houses. I'll say.

The point has to be that we've got problems at the Workers' Compensation Board. They've got to be fixed. Part of the problems is clearly with the cost structure and a bureaucratic tangle that continue to be a problem. But let us go forward in a spirit of fairness and generosity. There is at least one religious tradition that says, "What you do unto the least of my brothers, you do unto me." I just worry that there is too much of an instinct in our society today to scapegoat and to single out and to marginalize and attack the most vulnerable people, and that's an instinct we've got to resist.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to start my speech tonight and conclude tomorrow, because I've only got about two or three minutes to get into it tonight. Let me start off by making this very simple point: The government at the beginning of this — I've been listening to government members in debate here and I listened to the minister when she introduced this legislation way back when to reform the workers' compensation system — says we

need to do this primarily because there is a financial crisis at the Workers' Compensation Board.

There might be a problem, but there is far from a crisis at the Workers' Compensation Board in dealing with the unfunded liability. The government members stand in this House and say that the unfunded liability is terrible, that it's a mess. I listened to the member for Etobicoke-Humber get up a little bit earlier and say, if all the claims of the Workers' Compensation Board had to be paid as of 12 o'clock tonight, there would be an unfunded liability. That's true. Nobody argues that. That's how insurance systems work.

But if you're saying it's a crisis to have to pay all the workers' compensation claims by 12 o'clock tonight, I wonder what would happen if London Life or Mutual Life of Canada or any of the private insurance companies

in this country had to pay out on every individual life claim and every individual disability claim at 12:01 tonight. Do you think there might be an unfunded liability with one of those private insurance companies? Of course there is. Insurance companies work under the premise that they collect fees over a longer period of time to be able to insure their customers. That's basically how insurance works.

I'm going to get into that debate a little further on tomorrow, when we get back into debate. It being almost 6 of the clock, I would ask that we carry on this debate at another time.

The Speaker: It now being just about 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1759.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepean	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, deputy government House leader / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances, chef parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Chiarelli, Robert	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition

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DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (rural affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
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Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
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Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
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Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
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Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
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Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)

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Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
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Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Laughren, Floyd	Nickel Belt	ND	
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Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
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Marland, Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William	Eglinton	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
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Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
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Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, David	York Mills	PC	chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
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Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	
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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

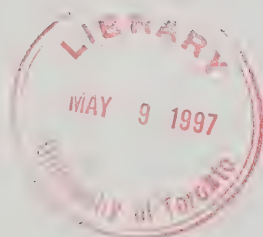
Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 6 May 1997

Mardi 6 mai 1997



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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 mai 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): It's alarming enough that the Harris government is downloading its responsibilities such as social housing, child care, public health and ambulance services on to municipalities, a plan that will mean higher property taxes for hard-pressed property taxpayers, just so the government can deliver on its income tax cut for the benefit of the rich. Its full-speed-ahead dumping tactics have no regard for the hardship this will bring on average homeowners, no regard for the needs of the poor, the sick and the elderly.

Municipalities are justly concerned that their bigger share of the burden will have devastating consequences for the people of this province, but this government's bullying tactics don't stop there. In its blind zeal to find a tax cut, the Harris government is now dumping on to municipalities the added responsibility for helping seniors and the disabled, who will be hit the hardest by its property tax reforms.

I have this ad here which appeared in a major Toronto paper on April 30. It claims, "Hardest hit will be seniors who already rely on monthly pensions and retirement savings to keep taxes up to date." Shame on the Harris government. Instead of aiming to improve the lives of seniors, your policies are letting them fall prey to ads such as this, which capitalize on your mean-spirited policies. That is not the way to treat seniors, and I'm calling on the government to do whatever they can to alleviate the pain and suffering of seniors in our province.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Today I'll be presenting to the Legislature a petition signed by 28,000 people from southwestern Ontario protesting the hospital restructuring committee's recommendation that both the London Psychiatric Hospital and the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be closed.

The people of London and Elgin and Middlesex are deeply disturbed by the prospect of both psychiatric hospitals closing before the end of 1999. They know the minister has refused to confirm the restructuring commission's recommendations that all operating costs saved by such closures would be invested in an ongoing way into community-based services. They know that only the minister can order the closure of these hospitals as they

don't fall within the mandate of the restructuring commission's orders. They are confused by the minister's response to the member for Elgin on Thursday when, in response to a direct question as to whether the minister would close St Thomas, the minister responded no and then went on to justify closures.

What's more, the minister clearly is not aware that the hospital restructuring commission suggested that the St Thomas health centre in London maintain the governance of the forensic beds that the commission has recommended to be placed in St Thomas, and furthermore, that there would be no savings added by putting those beds in the general hospital in St Thomas.

The minister must make himself aware of what has actually been proposed and stop putting his focus on cutting costs rather than providing services.

SUSAN STUART

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to take this opportunity today to congratulate a very special constituent of mine in my riding high atop Hamilton Mountain by the name of Susan Stuart. This past March the Rotary Club of Hamilton Mountain honoured Susan Stuart by naming her the Hamilton Mountain Citizen of the Year for her enormous contribution to the community.

Susan Stuart, an English high school teacher at Barton Secondary School for 27 years, has focused her efforts on helping to improve the lives of those in need. As the director of the cancer assistance program, she helps cancer patients cope with the fear of cancer. When Susan started to see that more and more young people were being stricken with this tragic disease, she formed a Junior Board of Hope, where she acts as an adviser to 20 youngsters who volunteer to counsel young people with cancer. Her concern in dealing with this dreadful disease has also led her to organize and run the annual Cancer Dance-a-thon of Hope, an 18-hour marathon which has raised over \$40,000 in the past 12 years.

A volunteer and fund-raiser for the Ronald McDonald House, she also finds the time to raise funds for the Lung Association, of which she is a director.

At Barton Secondary School, which I might also add is my alma mater, she founded the Barton Caring for Kids Club, which raises funds and creates awareness for community needs.

In her spare time, Susan works with the Lady Hamilton Club, which promotes the Hamilton area at the Tourist Information Centre.

On behalf of the constituents of Hamilton Mountain, I congratulate Susan Stuart for this award, but more important, thank her for her contribution to the quality of life in our community.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I rise out of extreme concern and frustration over the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism's failure to create jobs and business opportunities in eastern Ontario. The minister has been squirming on a promise that he will allow the closed provincial parks in eastern Ontario to reopen through partnership or private operator.

When I cautioned him last April 2 about the damage he was doing by not taking this door to jobs and tourism, he responded, "When the summer is finished, it's going to have been a very prosperous season for eastern Ontario." That was over a year ago. Not only did the parks not open last year, it looks like this season is going to come and go without the minister doing a bloody thing.

I'm tired, and the people of eastern Ontario are tired: the students who want jobs, the potential investors and partners, local business operators waiting for economic spinoff, even the potential tourists who want to visit the area. We are tired and frustrated over this do-nothing minister's failure to reopen the parks, because to move wouldn't cost the government a cent.

COOPERATIVE HOUSING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Sunday past, Mel and Thelma Swart and I were invited once again to the seventh AGM of Mel Swart Co-operative Homes down on Denistoun in Welland. As we met with those people, people who have been working as members of that cooperative, building their community, building their neighbourhood, we also sensed the strong fear that they and others who live in cooperative housing in Welland, across Niagara and throughout this province have of the abandonment of cooperative housing by both the Jean Chrétien Liberals and these Mike Harris Tories, would-be Reformers.

A whole lot of people have invested a whole lot of human energy in developing co-op housing. Welland illustrates as well as any community how important cooperative housing is to create fairness and balance in the availability of housing stock in any given community. These people are building homes, not just housing; they're building neighbourhoods; and they're building communities.

This government has not only abandoned them but treats those families who have chosen that lifestyle — that's what it is, and it's a lifestyle that builds rather than destroys; it's a lifestyle that nurtures rather than abolishes. This government has abandoned them, regards them with disdain. Neither Mike Harris nor his federal cousin, Jean Chrétien, are going to be tolerated as they put the cooperative housing movement under attack here in the province of Ontario.

NOEL CATNEY

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the new chief of the Peel Regional Police, Noel Catney. Chief Catney has risen within the ranks of Peel Regional Police, where he was most recently the deputy chief. His 27 years of

exemplary service in local policing have given him a strong commitment to the front-line officers, with whom he enjoys an excellent rapport.

Among Chief Catney's career milestones are Police Officer of the Year in 1983 and 1984, as well as numerous other awards and commendations, including special recognition for his investigation of the tragic shooting of Mississauga resident Barbara Turnbull.

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The Peel Regional Police officers welcomed the appointment of Chief Catney, who epitomizes the attributes of our finest police officers in Ontario. I know that under Chief Catney's leadership, Peel Regional Police will continue to provide excellent police services to the residents of Peel region.

My community is very fortunate that the fine women and men in our police force have chosen to dedicate their lives to protecting our neighbourhoods and enforcing our laws. Our police officers put their own lives at risk in order to defend ours. We are deeply grateful for their bravery and their commitment to public service.

I wish Chief Catney and his officers the very best in their new working relationship and I look forward to working with them to resolve any law enforcement concerns that arise within the provincial government's jurisdiction.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The grape and wine industry is of immense benefit to Ontario as a whole and to the Niagara region and southwestern Ontario in particular. That is why the repressive tax policy of the Conservative government of Mike Harris must be changed to provide our wineries with a fair opportunity to compete on a level playing field with producers around the world.

The news that the efforts of the Liberal caucus and representatives of Ontario wineries might be having an effect on the provincial government is encouraging, but the final details will be the proof required.

By making representations to the finance and economic affairs committee of the Ontario Legislature, the Ontario Wine Council has chosen an appropriate forum, consideration of Bill 106 on municipal assessment, to bring to the government's attention this lack of wisdom of assigning an industrial assessment category to our wineries. An amendment to Bill 106 may be the way to solve this dilemma, as long as it restores an agricultural designation for municipal taxation purposes.

I am again calling upon the Harris government to abandon this unwise and punitive measure affecting estate wineries in Ontario and to return to the farm assessment model, which is far more appropriate to estate wineries and consistent with similar operations across the province. The fate of our grape and wine industry is in the hands of the provincial government and only the abandonment of this disastrous taxation policy is acceptable.

BUDGET

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Aujourd'hui marque le deuxième budget du gouvernement conserva-

teur. Dans les deux années qui viennent juste de passer avec ce gouvernement, on a vu beaucoup de coupures dans tous les programmes nécessaires pour le soutien des francophones de la province.

Mais plus important, on voit l'attitude du gouvernement quand ça vient aux services aux francophones de la province. On n'a pas l'appui du gouvernement conservateur. On voit à l'hôpital Montfort, le seul hôpital francophone de la province, que le gouvernement traite cet hôpital comme tout autre hôpital dans l'Ontario en disant qu'on peut fermer ses portes sans avoir de conséquences pour la communauté francophone.

Ce n'est pas acceptable. On dit comme francophones de la province et on dit comme néo-démocrates ici à l'Assemblée avec nos confrères au Parti libéral que le gouvernement conservateur a besoin de commencer à écouter et à agir sur les préoccupations des francophones de la province. Il n'est pas acceptable que le gouvernement traite la communauté francophone d'une telle manière à travers toutes les actions que l'on a prises jusqu'à date.

Le gouvernement a l'occasion aujourd'hui d'envoyer un message à la communauté francophone qu'ils sont préparés à supporter les besoins et les programmes nécessaires pour la communauté francophone, comme l'hôpital Montfort, et j'attends aujourd'hui, avec ce budget, ce message.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I rise to inform all members of the Legislature that this week Buddhists in Ontario and around the world are celebrating the birthday of the founder of their religion, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha.

A prince of India, Gautama often pondered the meaning of life and the cause of human suffering. He then left his family and the trappings of royalty to follow a strict monastic existence. After long wanderings, he sat one day and began to meditate under a bodhi tree. After a lengthy meditation, Gautama received enlightenment and became the Buddha, or Enlightened One.

Buddhist followers were taught the noble eightfold path, which incorporates ideas like right action and right thought. These ideals represent a strong morality to respect all living things and to try and live a good and thoughtful life.

Buddhism today is widespread throughout China, Japan, Korea and Tibet. Zen Buddhist meditation has become popular in the west and among Christians like the Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

This week Buddhists everywhere will observe the Buddha's birthday with special religious services, meditations and celebrations. The Buddha's message of peace and compassion is compelling to people of all cultures and religions. The Buddhist ideal of concentrating on becoming a better, more thoughtful human being is one that everyone should strive to achieve.

On behalf of the Ontario government, I would like to wish all Buddhist Ontarians a happy celebration of the Buddha's birth. Om, maney padmey hum. Hail, thou jewel in the lotus.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, the media are a bit abuzz about the idea that somehow today you're going to patch up the mess you've made in health care in this province, that somehow there's going to be some good news you're going to try to eke out around the health care system.

The Premier yesterday said he hadn't taken a cent out of patient care. I'd like you, as the minister who has taken \$800 million out of hospitals, and much of it out of patient care, to explain to people today the impact you've had, to Mr Wa-li Akhras, who took his three-day-old son to Sick Kids emergency and had to wait 30 minutes for triage. Triage is supposed to take place in less than 15 minutes. His child died in his arms. His three-day-old child had half a heart and was discharged from Scarborough General less than one day before that.

Minister, \$21.5 million was cut from Sick Kids in the last two years; \$7.7 million was cut from Scarborough General. You're talking about Band-Aids today. When will you —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for York South. Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): If the honourable member would like to provide the particulars of the case at Sick Children's, we will undertake to investigate that right away. The chief executive officer and the chair of the board of Sick Kids have said many times on the public record that getting rid of waste and duplication and excessive administration in the system is what restructuring is about. Sick Kids endorses the restructuring. In fact, if the interim report of the Health Services Restructuring Commission on Toronto holds up, there will be even more services available for more children at Sick Kids and a new paediatric network that will be very much headed by Sick Kids in this part of the province.

As I said, the Hospital for Sick Children and its administration have indicated that there has been no effect on patient care as a result of the savings plan to date. In fact, the honourable member is wrong. We have put over \$900 million back into the health care system, much of that new money from the closing of other ministries. There's more money in health care today in spite of a \$2-billion cut from the federal government.

Mr Kennedy: That's not what Mr Akhras wants to hear, and frankly, it's not what people in the province want to hear. They want some straight facts. You have not put \$900 million back in; you promised it. That's not what you've spent and you know there's a difference. You know there's \$22 million missing from Sick Kids and this gentleman was told that the cutbacks were why he got the treatment he did.

In Niagara region there is an emergency that happened on April 22 in a domestic dispute where a father injured his four-year-old daughter. The ambulance first went to the Greater Niagara hospital. The emergency room was closed to new patients. They then went to St Catharines General. That hospital was also closed to patients. They

then went to Welland hospital. The Welland hospital emergency room was also closed. The daughter was finally accepted for treatment at Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, which you want to close.

The workers say these bypasses are becoming increasingly frequent.

The Speaker: Question?

Mr Kennedy: One of them is because they have to treat people in emergency because they don't have nurses and beds elsewhere and they can't accept new patients in. How can you justify cutting more in this budget —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for York South. Minister of Health.

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Hon Mr Wilson: Again the honourable member needs to be reminded that we have put \$950 million into health care in spite of cuts from the federal government. The fact that the honourable member brings up cases today that are based on the current system when restructuring has not occurred I think makes a very good case, particularly in the area he has just mentioned, for why we need to restructure. We cannot keep having ambulances, as they do today, doing the bypass or practising what they have to practise now because of disorganization in the hospital system. The fact of the matter is that it needs to be better coordinated and the Health Services Restructuring Commission is doing that.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Minister, one of these days we're going to have to call in an emergency ambulance for the contortions that you go through to try and escape the mismanagement you've put the hospital system through in the last two years. This is Jim Wilson's hospital system we're talking about, Jim Wilson and Mike Harris cutting \$800 million from hospitals and misleading us about what's going back.

Minister, stand in your place. You may not like it, but you're the minister and you need to respond.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Dufferin-Peel and Perth, both come to order, please. Member.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Tymchyshyn from Oakville is not going to be fooled by you wrecking hospitals for two years and then saying it's time to fix them or time to change them or to justify something else. He went there, unfortunately, and waited four hours for a blood test. He waited there four hours with a severe headache. He and his family waited another hour afterwards for a test that's supposed to take 15 minutes. In excruciating pain, after five hours of waiting at a hospital that you've cut more than \$10 million from, he went home. But unfortunately, Mr Tymchyshyn died. Mr Tymchyshyn died the next day.

Minister, we all know there are mistakes in hospitals, but there is a need for you to acknowledge what your Premier would not yesterday. Your health care cuts to hospitals have lowered the patient care, have jeopardized people in those hospitals, have made the nurses and practitioners deal under an extraordinary amount of stress trying to do their jobs.

Will you today tell us at least that you will do whatever needs to be done to fix this system, will you eliminate the second year of cuts and will you put in place a way to deal with the first year? Minister, will you do that?

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member is out of sync with the Ontario Hospital Association, which has pleaded with governments for years to restructure the hospital system. Again, last night in this building we had a wide-ranging discussion. There were representatives from the Ontario Hospital Association there and they got up in front of everyone and said, "The government's doing the right thing in restructuring the hospital system."

The fact that services have fallen behind over the years is exactly the reason that we need to restructure the system today. What's our number one complaint? It's that people go into a hospital and the waiting times are too long and the waiting lists are too long and they don't see a professional front-line worker often enough. That is today's system. That is the system that we, along with the experts and the partners in health care, are trying to fix, something the Liberals ignored during their time in office and something the NDP started on but unfortunately or fortunately, depending on your perspective, weren't in office long enough to continue the reform they started.

I think in your heart of hearts and your honesty of honesties you realize the government is doing the right thing. We are trying to ensure that we have more services.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My question was to the Minister of Labour. Since she's not here, I will stand my question down until she gets in the House.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Minister, you will know that over half of all immigrants to Canada come to Ontario. Many of these are individuals with valuable skills and expertise from their home countries, but they can't get jobs when their skills are not recognized here in Ontario.

During the election Mike Harris promised swift action to deal with access to professions and trades, while the swift action he took, Minister, was to kill the cabinet round table on anti-racism that was dealing with this issue. You then followed through on repealing the employment equity legislation, which would have opened doors to jobs for people from visible minorities, and you then proceeded to kill the Employment Equity Commission. You closed the Anti-Racism Secretariat and eliminated the advisory council on disability issues. That's your answer.

In December 1995, you said here in this House, "One of the most significant barriers to equal opportunity prevents skilled people who were trained and educated outside of Canada from having their academic credentials recognized."

It's now more than one and a half years later, and all we've got is a spiffy Web site as your response. What are you going to do and when are you going to move on recognizing —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Dovercourt. Minister.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): As the honourable member is aware, we have a very strong equal opportunity program that is committed to newcomer settlement and is committed to economic development opportunities and is committed to strengthening the opportunities for all newcomers to this province.

Mr Silipo: I have to say it's a fairly pathetic answer. The minister is aware of the importance of this issue. Her own leaked document makes some reference to the fact that the government is going to be leading the development of an academic credential assessment service, but all we've seen so far is just talk and a spiffy Web site.

What I want the minister to do today is tell us, in effect, what is her ministry doing, what is her government doing, to ensure that there is in this province a credible academic credential assessment service? She knows that Quebec has a system in place; Alberta has one; British Columbia has one. She knows that there are organizations in this province, including an organization called Skills for Change, that have put proposals in front of her to tell her exactly how this can be done. What I would like to know from her today is, when is she going to move to make this talk a reality?

Hon Ms Mushinski: The honourable member already knows that we have a very strong equal opportunity commitment. Not only are we strengthening the role of the Human Rights Commission, but we do indeed have a credentials assessment process in place. We want to make sure that it works appropriately, unlike the previous government, none of whose programs contributed to the effective and early settlement of new immigrants to this province. I want to assure the member opposite that we are committed to an equal opportunity program that will be effective and that will lead to early settlement and early opportunity for new settlers to this province.

Mr Silipo: When the minister says that her government has a strong commitment to equal opportunity, that's when I begin to worry, because then I just have to put her words against her record, and I don't take much comfort from that.

I would like to hear something a little bit more specific than that. You know, among other things, that there are organizations like the society of international veterinarians in Canada, who have pointed out to you that there are over 300 immigrant veterinarians currently living in Ontario, and they are facing incredible barriers because of the difficulty of getting their credentials recognized here in Ontario. There are additional qualifications required, additional examinations, with additional costs, and that's just one example.

I want to come back to your own work plan, in which you say that part of your 1997-98 priorities will be to lead the development of an academic credential assessment service. You're almost two years into your government. Will we finally see some action during the 1997-98 fiscal year or am I going to have to stand here a year from now and ask you again when this is going to happen? What are we going to see during this next year?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Let me perhaps repeat to the honourable member exactly what our program initiatives are in citizenship. Through our citizenship programs and

initiatives, we provide approximately \$31 million to community organizations that support the settlement of immigrants and equal opportunity, including support to vulnerable adults, and community and economic development in aboriginal communities. We are committed, we have the dollars there — he knows that — unlike his programs, which spent, spent, spent, contributed to huge amounts of debt and provided no opportunities for new settlers to this province.

1400

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. As you know, the WCB occasionally gives tours of its offices to stakeholders such as injured workers or employer groups. Recently, several corporate executives from Sun Life Assurance Co were given one of these extensive "life of claim" tours at the WCB office. What's strange is that Sun Life, like all insurance companies, is exempt from the WCB. They are not covered by the WCB. They are not stakeholders in the WCB. Their only interest is making money off the WCB. Minister, what was Sun Life doing at the offices of the WCB on April 29?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Obviously, I don't know who is and who is not taking tours, but I'm happy to take your question under advisement and consult with the appropriate individuals at the WCB. I will certainly obtain an answer for you.

Mr Christopherson: Maybe I can be of some help, because I have here a set of questions and answers prepared for WCB executives regarding this issue. One of the questions is: "Why is Sun Life here? What are they doing?" What is the prepared answer? "Sun Life is not here doing anything. What may have contributed to that impression is that Mr John Gardner, a retired senior executive from Sun Life, has just joined our board of directors."

Minister, are you prepared now to deny that Sun Life and every other insurance company have not had any tours of the WCB with the intent of taking over privatized aspects of WCB?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The one thing I can tell you for certain is that this government has absolutely no plans — and I stress no plans — whatsoever to privatize the WCB. Of that I can absolutely give you my assurance.

Mr Christopherson: Well, Minister, you have today, and every time we've asked, said that you have no intention of privatizing any part of the WCB. Yet we know that the KPMG study you commissioned said that 75% of the WCB claims processing could be privatized. We know that you're already implementing parts of the KPMG plan, without having passed Bill 99, I might mention. We know that Sun Life has been through the WCB offices and taken a tour of the claims processing, yet they aren't a stakeholder. Now we know that there's a prepared cover story, a contrived story, concocted to explain why Sun Life was there. How do you square what you say with what the facts say?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just remind the member opposite that, as you know, the WCB is an arm's-length agency. I would also remind you that it was not the

government but the board that worked with KPMG and asked KPMG to do the study. I also want to emphasize to you that the board has very emphatically stated that claims processing is not going to be privatized. I know that was a concern, but the board has emphatically stated that.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My question is to the Minister of Labour. On December 6, 1996, you signed a new agreement with the province of Quebec to allow better access to the Quebec market for Ontario construction workers and contractors. This agreement was also endorsed by both Premier Harris and Premier Bouchard on March 7 of this year. In this agreement it is mentioned that a guide to the intention of the contractors and construction workers would be prepared and distributed as of January 31, 1997.

It is now early May. The construction season is here. Contractors and construction workers want to work on both sides of the border, but they are still in the dark about the new agreement. We've had all sorts of problems at the present time. I have a contractor here that was asked by the Quebec people for a \$40,000 deposit, plus they had to try three exams. According to the agreement, they didn't have to go through this.

Minister, what will you do to ensure that the user-friendly guide is produced and distributed in the very near future?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I know the member opposite has been in contact with the staff from the Ministry of Labour, and I will just give you the information that's already been provided to you. Although we had hoped to have the guide ready much earlier, unfortunately, because of reduced resources and also because of the fact that there was a need for the guide, as you know, to be translated into the two official languages — we now have a final draft of the guide. We removed it at the Ministry of Labour. We received it on April 30, just a few days ago. I can assure you that we are conducting a final review; it's going to print and it will be ready for distribution on May 12, in time for your contractor meeting on May 26.

Mr Lalonde: I was told by the Quebec government just this morning at about 11:30 that they are ready to go to press, but they are still waiting for your government's approval. Is the fact that your ministry has not given the approval because of budget restraint? Is it because we don't have the resources in place to do the translation, since the Quebec government information was given to us in French?

We have thousands of jobs at stake at the present time. Is it because of the saving of one translation employee that we are going to put those thousands of jobs at risk?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you can well appreciate, because this is an issue which has been ongoing for such a long time and which we feel is now at a point where we're seeing the resolution, we wanted to be absolutely certain that the English and French translations were accurate. As I indicated to you in my first response, we received the final draft on April 30, we have reviewed it,

and it will now be ready and it will be released, as I said, on May 12. We wanted to make sure it was accurate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary; the member for Timiskaming.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Minister, that answer's not good enough. Because you don't have the resources to put three or four extra translators into your department to get that paperwork completed, it's costing thousands of jobs in this province. Thousands of Quebec workers are streaming across that border; they're working in Windsor, they're working in Metro, they're working in the Ottawa Valley and they're working in northeastern Ontario, displacing Ontario workers because of your bureaucratic bungling.

Will you give us the commitment today that you'll put extra staff on that and get that brochure produced so Ontario workers can start to work in Quebec on an equal basis to Quebec workers in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the one thing you need to understand is that no other government before us had attempted to resolve this situation. We have brought the problem, in terms of having equal access to Quebec for our workers, to a successful conclusion. We want to make sure we get it right. We don't want to get it wrong. That's why we are doing the job in the way it needs to be done. We're making sure that it's done accurately. Unfortunately, we have been held up by Quebec, and we have been trying to work diligently together.

1410

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Your credibility as the advocate for the arts community in cabinet is at a shockingly low level. After two years of debilitating cuts that have ravaged the cultural infrastructure, resulting in lost jobs and the cultural industry being pushed over the edge, the arts community is now bracing for more bad news in today's budget.

The question that everyone needs an answer to today is exactly where the minister stands on public support for the arts. Minister, you were quoted recently as saying that continued public support for the arts may not be in the public interest. If that is how you feel, if your lack of understanding of the economic and social value of the arts is such that you see no public interest in continued support, you should resign.

My question to the minister is, if that's how you feel, does your statement represent this government's position on support for the arts?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Thank you, to the honourable member for Port Arthur, for your question. I will repeat, as I have said to him on many occasions, as I have said to the cultural community, my government does indeed value the role that is played by the cultural sector in our province. That is why my ministry continues to invest in cultural development through a variety of programs and activities.

Mr Gravelle: One can see why representatives of the arts communities are now calling for the minister's resignation. That was simply pap.

Minister, let me remind you, over the last 20 months you pulled 30% of the funding from the Ontario Arts Council. They're now operating on 1988 funding levels. Let me also remind you that you promised the Ontario Arts Council in a letter that their budget for 1997-98 will be maintained at last year's levels and then a couple of months later indicated there would be further cuts.

Ontario Liberals believe that culture does matter. It matters to the 82% of Ontarians who tell us that access to cultural institutions and activities greatly enriches their quality of life. Will you finally do the right thing, Minister, and will you agree today that the Ontario Arts Council and other organizations supported through your ministry should receive stable funding in today's budget announcement because that is in the public interest? Will you confirm it today?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Let me tell you what is in the public interest. It's not raising taxes 32 times by that government and 33 times by that government. It's about balancing budgets and it's about sustaining what we have in a different way. It's about doing business differently.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Minister of Education say yes. It's budget day.

Hon Ms Mushinski: Obviously, they don't like to hear the truth over there. They can't handle the truth, as someone says. If I may just wrap up, I can say to the honourable member —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Just a minute. You're out of order in heckling and I can't hear the response. I'd ask the opposition members to come to order. I would ask a couple of my friends behind the minister that it would be helpful, if you're going to heckle, you heckle from your seat, and even if you heckle from your seat, you're still out of order, so it would be helpful if you could remember that. Minister.

Hon Ms Mushinski: Let me just, if I may, explain a couple of programs we have indeed introduced to assist the cultural sector becoming more self-sufficient. For example, we introduced the Ontario film and television production tax credit last year, and it is anticipated that that tax credit alone will inject about \$15 million into the Ontario film and television production community in its first year. We continue to provide grants through the Ontario Arts Council to the tune of \$30.3 million, and TVOntario, \$55.5 million. The Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ontario Science Centre all receive stable funding. Unlike the previous government —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, third party.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As members of this assembly would know, and others throughout the public, your government is busily privatizing highway maintenance contracts throughout Ontario. In fact, up in the Cochrane district you are now tendering for a highway

maintenance contract. Simply put, you're kicking out the workers working for the Ministry of Transportation who plow our roads in the winter and you're going to replace them with private contractors to do that work. Myself and my party are opposed to this, but I ask you this: Do you guarantee that the tendering process you're going through now is going to be fair and is going to allow every contractor the opportunity to bid on that particular highway maintenance contract?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Certainly I believe we have told the public our business plan. We plan to outsource winter maintenance and summer maintenance to become more efficient and do more for less, and that is certainly our goal. But I want to assure the member that if that is going to be the best resource Ontario has, we will not jeopardize whatever standards we have.

Mr Bisson: I would like once, only once, for the minister to stand up and try to answer the question. It would make this process so much easier. You haven't answered the question, so I'm going to try it again. You're tendering a contract in the Cochrane district in order to do the highway maintenance projects throughout that particular area. I ask you the question: Is that process of tendering going to be fair?

I just found out from an internal document of the Ministry of Transportation, out of your human resources section, answers to questions asked by employees. I want to read you one question: "Will offers of employment come from the contractor or the ministry after the contracts have been tendered and have been given?" The answer by your ministry is, "IMOS will contact the individual employees to whom they wish to make job offers." It sounds to me like the fix is in. You're already saying in your own documents that you're going to give this to IMOS. How is that fair for the other contractors who are trying to get in on this?

Hon Mr Palladini: I really am disappointed with the assumption the honourable member is making, that we have already contracted out winter and summer maintenance in the north. That has not happened. I want to assure the honourable member that if we are going to take that course, just like it has been proven in the Chatham district, IMOS, which happened to be the winning contractor, hired a whole bunch of people who worked for MTO. I'm sure, if that is what is going to happen up north in certain districts, that the people who are doing the work presently most likely will end up doing the same work for the private contractor.

1420

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question today is for the Attorney General. There's little doubt that violence against women is a very serious concern in Ontario today. Although statistics surrounding the rates of domestic abuse in Ontario are very distressing, I am pleased to stand in the House today and announce that the people of Perth county have taken the initiative and are addressing this problem.

Over 18 months ago, members of the community formed the Perth county Domestic Abuse Review Team,

known as DART. This team, comprised of crown attorneys, police officers, representatives of Optimism Place, the children's aid society and Perth-Huron services, is working together to combat domestic abuse.

Last Thursday, DART launched a public information campaign to heighten community awareness of serious domestic abuse and the need to improve investigation and prosecution of domestic assault.

Interjections.

Mr Bert Johnson: I'm terribly sorry that domestic abuse doesn't seem to be a serious issue for those across. Can the minister tell the House the results of these efforts by the concerned citizens of Perth county?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate the question from the member for Perth, because domestic assault is a prevalent and very serious social problem.

In Perth county, through the leadership of the crown attorney, the police officers, representatives of Optimism Place, the children's aid society and Family Services Perth-Huron, this group has come together to develop a manner in which domestic abuse cases are prosecuted.

This group comes together once a month. They track cases as they go through the courts. They have developed a mechanism of ensuring that the best evidence can be brought before the courts. They have a mechanism to obtain sworn statements at the scene of these crimes.

As a result of these efforts and as a result of the cooperation from the judiciary, who ensure that in Perth county these cases are heard within three months, the success rate in prosecution of these cases is in excess of 80%, probably the best in the province. It is a project that has been undertaken by members within Perth county.

Mr Bert Johnson: I know my constituents are concerned about domestic abuse, and I'm proud to say that they have taken action to control it in Perth county. I agree with the minister that the efforts of DART are something to be applauded, and I'll be sure to pass on his support.

In the meantime, my constituents, including the students of Stratford Central Secondary School who are in the gallery today, would like to know what the minister is doing to ensure that the justice system is protecting women in other areas of Ontario from ongoing abuse.

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, thank you to the member for Perth. In addition to the domestic abuse court in Stratford, a very successful project, we have two pilot projects dealing with domestic assault, in Toronto and in North York. We have specialized courts that deal with this very pervasive problem. We have specialized courts that we have opened in Toronto and in North York to deal with it.

In addition, we have expanded, through our Victims' Bill of Rights and victims' justice fund, services for victims. We have doubled the size of the victim-witness assistance program. We've quadrupled the size of the victim crisis assistance and referral service. We have a community victims initiatives program that's providing \$500,000 to community groups that are focusing on violence against women.

Each community is dealing with solutions that fit that community. Certainly Perth county has proved that's

doable, and they're to be commended. We are happy to work with them as they develop these —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Attorney General and it regards the family support plan. Attorney General, you know this has been a plan that has been bungled, a real mess, and we bring case after case to you on a daily basis.

But right now I have a company that has a problem. It's a very well respected company within my riding known as Avenor. It's a company that has always gone that extra mile for its employees and has bent over backwards for them.

Minister, I'll send you over a letter from the company. In that letter, Avenor explains how they are being blamed for your mismanagement. Family support recipients who are not getting their cheques are calling them and suggesting that it's their fault. My research has indicated that it's not their fault, this is not the case and it's your mismanagement that has caused this.

In the letter, they ask for a formal inquiry as they want to clear their names, as I'm sure any other employer would want to. Minister, will you agree to their request for this formal inquiry?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I have just seen this letter now for the first time. I will be happy to look into this for the member and see that if there is a problem it will be looked into.

As you're aware, the family support plan is now able to answer 50% of the calls that come to it, up from 6%. The family support plan is now disbursing more money at a faster rate than it ever has disbursed before.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): What about the other 50%?

Hon Mr Harnick: At the present time, we are disbursing in excess of 200,000 more, on average, than the plan has ever been able to.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Welland-Thorold, come to order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: The minister is provoking me.

The Speaker: That's understandable, but still come to order.

Mr Miclash: If that were the case, why would I be receiving a letter such as that? Let me quote from the letter:

"It is a public belief that the payments are being delayed by Avenor Inc. However, after further investigation, Avenor has concluded that the payments are in fact reaching their required destination on time. The problem arises with processing the payments on time. Unfortunately, the problem has negatively affected Avenor's integrity and image throughout the Dryden community.

"Avenor Inc dry mill operations is requesting a formal inquiry into the proceedings of the Ministry of the Attorney General's office regarding the distribution delay of family support payments."

Again, a very simple request. Will you agree to their request?

Hon Mr Harnick: Just to satisfy the member, I can tell him that the plan is presently disbursing 12% more money to women and children now than it did a year ago. Some \$8 million to \$12 million per week is being disbursed from the plan, more than has ever happened.

As I've indicated to the member, I will look into this, I will get back to him and I will also make sure that we speak with the company to ensure that the plan is dealing properly with them.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. A couple of weeks ago your government made an announcement about more resources for vulnerable children and children at risk in the province. But in that announcement and in discussions with people who deliver services to that clientele, there's absolutely no mention of more money for front-line delivery agencies or service providers, particularly in northern Ontario.

Your government has singlehandedly done more to damage vulnerable families in this province by the reduction of 22% in the welfare payments to those families. When are you going to stop the public relations exercises and actually do something for vulnerable children in this province? When are you going to give some money to those people who are out there today on the front lines, in the trenches, trying to help families that are being decimated by your government as every day goes by?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): With all due respect to the honourable member, that money is flowing for our healthy babies initiative, which is built on the public health units, which my colleague the Minister of Health is doing across the province to help identify high-risk children at birth who need the supports; the Better Beginnings program, which is being funded through my ministry, health and education, that has sites in eight places across the province, which again is providing supports for high-risk families; the speech and language program, where we are doubling the number of preschool children who are getting support if they have speech and language disorders; as well as the Invest in Kids Foundation, the charitable foundation that does intervention and prevention programs for children; not to mention the money that we announced early in January for parents with disabled children, to help them support and take care of their children at home.

I would suggest with all due respect that we do have a very positive record on this in terms of what we're doing to support children in need.

Mr Martin: If you talk to people out there receiving services or delivering services, it's a completely different story. In fact, what has been announced by this government is such a pittance that when you compare it to the damage that's being done, it's negligible. The money really isn't flowing and there's not enough of the little bit that is.

Let's be specific. In my community we have a program called the infant development program. I was talking to

the people in that agency this morning and asking them, are there things that they're going to get because of this announcement? They said, "Absolutely not." I asked them, "What have you on the table with the ministry that would be new and innovative?" They said, "Nothing," because they're having problems right now delivering what they have a mandate to deliver in the first place. They're under great stress to deliver the programs they're mandated by your ministry and your government to deliver.

Will there be money for organizations such as the infant development program in Sault Ste Marie to deliver much-needed relief to families and children in Sault Ste Marie and Algoma because of this announcement or any other announcement you might make in the future to help vulnerable and needy children in this province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Part of the money we released in January that is going out across the province is for the infant development program. That is a program that has been doing some wonderful things with parents with disabled infants, helping them work with those children to give them a better quality of life and actually to improve their ability to function as they grow older.

That is a program that had not received new money for many, many years. We are providing new money for that program, and if the honourable member has concerns about it, perhaps he should have asked his own Treasurer in the five years when they were in government, when they chose not to give that program any new money.

1430

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is to the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization. My question relates to the Ontario privatization review framework and the review of four government businesses which you announced on April 28, 1997.

My constituents of Durham East are confident that your review framework will be fair and reasonable. I noticed there was an editorial in yesterday's Toronto Star which questioned, "Why would the government consider reviewing entities which provide revenue to the province?"

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I think it's important to understand it is government's challenge to make sure that the government businesses we are running have kept pace with the times. In reviewing these government businesses, I think we have to determine ways in which we can improve value to Ontarians in two capacities that they hold: as consumers of the services, and in many cases as financiers through their tax dollars.

Government entities may appear to be profitable on the surface, but in many cases it's important to assess what true operating costs are involved, the nature in which those operating costs arise, who pays for them and the basis upon which they are paid for. This is one of the items we will consider when we do the assessments of the various government businesses that we think are candidates for change.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I wonder if the minister could elaborate further on other

matters which could be considered with respect to the review of other candidates.

Hon Mr Sampson: It's very important and a part of the process — that's why we had it in the first part — to make an assessment, and a very fair assessment, of the various options that are possible under privatization. Many people believe that privatization simply means the sale of an asset to one individual or to a corporation, and that's not the case.

Privatization means a number of options and alternatives that other jurisdictions have considered and have made work quite well, other options that involve different levels of participation by the private sector to make sure we can deliver to Ontarians, whether they be taxpayers or whether they be consumers of the service, fair value for their money and the right level of service that they have been asking of this government.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We all know about the devastating flooding that has carried on in southern Manitoba, but here in Ontario, in Essex and Kent county to be exact, we have our own flood disaster. Damage to breakwalls and property in the last two events has exceeded \$1 million. The township of Mersea asked you nearly two weeks ago if you would reinstate funding under the Shoreline Property Assistance Act program so that residents can receive a hand up as they cope with flood damage. Will you secure the funding for this loan assistance and help the flood victims in Essex and Kent county?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Yes, we did receive the request several weeks ago. The staff are now meeting with local officials to determine just what can be done. Everybody recognizes the amount of damage that was done as a result of those floods, and I will be glad to report back to the member after I have the response of the staff investigation.

Mr Crozier: Minister, I'm pleased to hear that. I'm sure Mersea township would like to hear an answer to their letter. I've checked as recently as today and they hadn't heard anything back. I've been in touch with the regional conservation authority and we've been back and forth by phone. They haven't said that your officials are meeting with them.

Perhaps you could tell me today who those official are, what the results of the meeting are, how quickly you're prepared to act. Notwithstanding what you might think, you can't control the weather and there could be another disaster today, tomorrow or the next day. I'd like to know, who have they been meeting with, when did the meetings start, and when do you expect you'll be able to approve some assistance to the residents of Essex and Kent county?

Hon Mr Leach: Again, in response to the member, we are looking into the situation. I told him that I would get back to him immediately after I have an opportunity to discuss this with my staff. This government has an excellent record of assisting people who experience disasters as a result of floods or fires or tornadoes. We

have been very, very good with that and we will continue to be. I don't know why the member can't take yes for an answer. I told him I would get back to him.

Mr Crozier: You haven't been meeting with anybody. You just sloughed it off. At least you could be honest about it.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Essex South, you'll have to withdraw that comment, the heckling you made.

Mr Crozier: You mean about being honest about it? I'm just asking him to tell the truth. I'll withdraw it, but he'd better be having meetings, because —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Actually, you have two options: One is to withdraw and the other is not to withdraw. Your choice.

Mr Crozier: Boy, that sure limits it, Speaker, but I'll withdraw it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. The people of Chatham and Kent county are now getting the megacity treatment you imposed in Toronto. The 42,000 people in Chatham and the 110,000 people of Kent county had no say at all in the megacity you have created there. Instead, your appointed dictator, Mr Peter Meyboom, in effect told rural and urban people alike: "Big Brother at Queen's Park knows best. We don't care what you think."

This is what the mayor from Chatham, Bill Erickson, said: "We're the first to have a single, solitary human being deciding a future." What an honour you have bestowed on those communities.

Minister, how many communities will have the honour or privilege to have megacities imposed on them by your government or by some hired gun of yours?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can tell the member that in excess of 350 municipalities are presently undertaking restructuring studies or amalgamation studies. So far in 1997, there are 134 fewer municipalities and over 600 fewer politicians as a result of the initiatives by municipalities to restructure and get rid of the waste and duplication that currently exists as the result of overgovernment.

Chatham-Kent went from 28 municipalities to one. That was done at the request of the people from Chatham-Kent. They requested the commissioner to come in and resolve the issue. He did an excellent job.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, this minister has no clue of what he speaks. The people from Chatham-Kent did not request this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Scarborough East, the member for Bruce, come to order, and the member for Dufferin-Peel. Please come to order. The member for Perth. Thank you.

Member for Fort York.

1440

Mr Marchese: The people of Chatham-Kent did not request what the dictator, M. Peter Meyboom, imposed on

them. In fact, this henchman of this government has imposed on them something they did not want. He appears to be saying that's what they requested. That's not the case.

I have something else to add. The parliamentary assistant just a month ago said that he had no intention of imposing megacities outside Toronto. I quote the parliamentary assistant, M. Gilchrist, who said, "We want home-grown solutions," and on amalgamation he said, "That is your call, not ours." But Dr Meyboom imposed this solution on those two communities, contrary to what M. Gilchrist is saying. What we have here is the Tory jackboot being brought down on the people of Chatham and Kent county.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York, I ask that you withdraw that comment.

Mr Marchese: You refer to the "Tory jackboot" comment?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr Marchese: I haven't finished my question.

The Speaker: Your time ran out.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. With respect, to the member for Fort York, you made the comment. I asked you to withdraw. Your time doesn't stop running. That was a decision you took. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon Mr Leach: If that member had any less understanding of how this process works, he'd have to reach up to touch bottom. The process is that the communities within Chatham-Kent wrote to the province, wrote to the minister and said, "Please appoint a commissioner to come in and resolve this situation for us."

Dr Meyboom, a very highly respected member of our community, went down there, held public meetings, involved the public, involved all of the councils, got all of their recommendations, presented the results of his findings to the public again through public meetings, and the people of Chatham-Kent are extremely happy. Our member from Chatham tells me that his conversations with residents right throughout the community are very supportive of Dr Meyboom's recommendations.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): There is no such thing.

Mr Hastings: There certainly is. Not only that, all the members on this side campaigned in 1995 on a commitment to job creation, to red tape elimination and to getting the economy of Ontario going. Recently, Minister, you visited the Latin American countries of Argentina, Brazil and Chile. What we would like to know is, what were the results of your trade initiative to Latin America?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'm very happy to answer the honourable member's question. I would like

to tell him, first of all, that the mission to South America, the three countries he mentioned, was an unqualified success. I'd like to give the House some examples of the success because we should rejoice in this because it means jobs and economic development.

First of all, there was an \$11.1-million agreement signed with a municipality in Argentina and that's going to design, supply and install a street lighting project, and there will be more to come like that. The second thing is there was a joint venture signed, worth more than \$32 million, to provide energy conservation services plus energy-efficient technologies. There was also, thirdly, a signed memorandum of understanding between the province of Ontario and a province of Argentina to promote joint activities with small and medium-sized businesses. I think ultimately what will mature from this trade mission are transactions well in excess of \$50 million.

Mr Hastings: Could the minister inform the House as to what number of Ontario companies participated and from what economic sectors these companies came in creating such a successful initiative in Latin America?

Hon Mr Saunderson: In response to the supplementary question, I will list in order the answer to his questions. First of all, there were 15 Ontario companies along with two community colleges and the University of Toronto accompanying me on the trip. There were high-level contacts made in all three countries with regions and national leaders of those jurisdictions, and all these jurisdictions have strong economic growth and diversified economies somewhat similar to those of Ontario, I'm pleased to report.

I'm also pleased to report that these three countries are showing great control over inflation and interest rates and that is why I think they are ideal partners for our province. The mission caused spectacular rises in Ontario's profile. This is the first time a minister has been to these countries in a long time from any province of Canada, and I think the results from this trip are going to show growth in investment in Ontario, new product development and more jobs in our province.

I would like to conclude by saying that the key sectors —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population

which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems; and

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states, 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein'; and

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states, 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

This petition has been signed by more than 28,000 citizens in the Elgin, Middlesex and London area, and I sincerely hope that the minister will take account of the very strong local feeling that exists against the recommendations of the restructuring commission.

TVONTARIO

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality commercial-free television that continues to focus 70% of its programming schedule on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: A Petition to Preserve Top-Quality School Library Services:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has redefined the classroom to exclude all other school services; and

"Whereas one of these services is the school library program; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has stated that 'Equity of access to information is crucial to both individuals and to our society as a whole'; and

"Whereas the Minister of Education has stated that teacher-librarians 'are the critical filter that transforms data into information and into knowledge';

"We, the undersigned students and staff of Elliot Lake Secondary School, hereby petition the government of Ontario not to cut but to preserve top quality library services and staff."

This petition is signed by approximately 200 of my constituents.

1450

MERGER OF PSYCHIATRIC FACILITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition from approximately 500 people who are expressing concerns about the restructuring of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre and its merging with the Clarke Institute, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"We, the undersigned, express our opposition to the proposed merger between the Queen Street Mental Health Centre and the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry.

"Having now been informed about the merger through consultations, information-sharing sessions and written communications, we believe that the proposed merger is not in the best interests of consumers, staff and the community.

"While we recognize the benefits of the close and collegial relations between QSMHC and the Clarke Institute, this does not require a merger.

"We believe that the two institutions have separate and distinct mandates, agendas and expertise that would not be enhanced by the present plan."

I support this petition.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): "This petition is to help keep our school secretaries, custodians, library technicians and educational assistants from being contracted out. We'd like to keep these people here because we feel comfortable with them.

"Kelly Services won't know us and where to find things if they're different all the time.

"We like our secretaries, EAs, custodians and library technicians."

This is signed by 90 constituents of mine.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The petition drive to save TVO continues, and I'm very pleased that the member for Hamilton West read the petition.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Why don't we hear the petition.

Mr Gravelle: "Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television and continues to focus 70% of

its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded education broadcaster."

This is a list from Sudbury, and I'm very pleased to sign it myself.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from Canadian Auto Workers in Windsor and Oshawa forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, their national president. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards, and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations, to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights, and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I add my name to theirs.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I've been waiting for some time to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in Durham East.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Then let's present it.

Mr O'Toole: They are writing to share their thoughts and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"With respect to recommendation 6 of the Paroian report, this is a recommendation to exclude principals and vice-principals from the bargaining unit. We believe principals and vice-principals should remain members of the bargaining unit."

I'm pleased to present this petition today.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report" — I'm so glad there are so many members interested today from an area where the number one concern is health care — "based on a funding model that included the expansion of community based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services for any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000;

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas," and LaSalle for the third year in a row has the highest per capita growth in Canada,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow the Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

We are looking forward to a special line in the budget today.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a petition from the firefighters of the province who, as you know, are royally ticked at this government.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives, I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I have affixed my signature.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation," of course referring to the bill presented by MPP Margaret Marland, "that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

It's appropriate that we read this petition during the week we will debate the Wettlaufer motion. I've affixed my signature thereto.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission appointed by the health minister has recommended closure of the London and St Thomas psychiatric hospitals; and

"Whereas psychiatric patients are being displaced without adequate support systems;

"Whereas article 34(1) of the Mental Health Act states 'A patient shall be discharged from a psychiatric facility when he is no longer in need of the observation, care and treatment provided therein';

"Whereas article 34(2) of the Mental Health Act states 'Subsection (1) does not authorize the discharge into the community of a patient who is subject to detention otherwise than under this act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain psychiatric facilities separate from schedule 1 hospitals and managed by the Ministry of Health to ensure that no person will go untreated or will be placed at risk or cause another to be placed at risk."

I affix my signature to this.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I will affix my signature to this.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have a number of signatures, over 100, from Canadian Auto Workers, and as the member for Nickel Belt said, these people are royally ticked at the government. Perhaps that's too polite for how they feel.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let's hear the petition.

Ms Lankin: "Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker,

the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area are under attack; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further, we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I am pleased to affix my signature, as I am in agreement with the sentiments contained in this petition.

COOPERATIVE HOUSING

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has declared that they intend to get out of the housing business; and

"Whereas the federal government has stated its desire to devolve responsibility for federally initiated cooperative housing to the provinces; and

"Whereas it would be inconsistent with the Ontario government's declared policy to cut the cost and size of government for the province to accept responsibility for federally initiated cooperative housing; and

"Whereas a cost-efficient non-government alternative exists in the form of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's proposal, renewing the co-op housing partnership, meeting the challenge of efficiency and customer service for administering the program, delivery of cooperative housing;

"We urge the Ontario government as a cost-saving measure to turn down the federal government's proposal for the development of federally initiated cooperative housing to the province and endorse with the federal government a more efficient alternative proposal."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on administration of justice and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à promouvoir la prévention des incendies et la

sécurité publique en Ontario et modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois relatives aux services de lutte contre les incendies.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 84 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage / Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the bill be received and adopted? All those in favour please say "aye." All those opposed please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Shall Bill 107 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the members that we now suspend the proceedings until 4 o'clock, at which time the budget will be presented.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent to suspend the meeting until 4 o'clock, at which time the budget will be read? Agreed.

For the benefit of the members, I will cause the bells to be rung at 3:55, a five-minute bell before 4 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1504 to 1600.

1997 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Government notice of motion number 19.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Government notice of motion number 19, Mr Eves.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, I move, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd ask the indulgence of the House for the pages to deliver copies of the budget. Do all members have a copy of the budget?

Hon Mr Eves: The province of Ontario is on the way to a better tomorrow. The endless cycle of tax, spend and borrow is over. From the first day our government took office, our plan has been clear: Lift the burden of debt from our children's shoulders while reinvesting in priority programs like health care and education.

Under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, our plan allows Ontarians to keep more of their hard-earned money; it invests in health care, classroom education and safe communities; it reduces the size of government; and it ensures that taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely.

Between 1985 and 1995, the period Premier Mike Harris refers to as the lost decade, previous governments hiked taxes 65 times, including 11 increases to personal income tax alone. These tax hikes did not balance the budget nor did they create jobs. In fact, debt tripled over this period, choking Ontario's growth potential and eroding the economic health of this province.

Our government is turning the economy around. We recognize that all Ontarians deserve opportunity and a job, with the personal dignity and security that a job brings. To that end, we are continuing with our tax cuts to create jobs. Today I am announcing a further 20 reductions, for a total of 30 tax cuts in less than two years.

We have cut government spending in a deliberate and careful way, because government was too big, too wasteful and was doing too many things that could be done better by the private sector.

We are reducing the size of governments in this province, peeling away the layers of red tape and bureaucracy. We are redefining the role of governments in Ontario, to make them more accountable to taxpayers.

I am pleased to report today that our plan is working. Ontario's economy is responding with jobs and growth, and perhaps most importantly, with renewed confidence and optimism. This document builds on the budget I presented last year. It is based on sound economic and fiscal policies.

We are investing in the economy and helping Ontarians get jobs. This budget helps small businesses get access to capital, invest in the economy and do what they do best — create jobs.

We are investing in research and development to create jobs for the future. The actions I will announce today will reaffirm Ontario as one of the leading jurisdictions for new research and development in the entire world.

We are investing in health care because Ontarians deserve care that is second to none. Our government is not only keeping our commitment to guarantee health care funding; we are increasing our investment.

We are investing in our classrooms and in fairer support for child care for all working families, giving Ontario's future leaders the best start possible.

We are investing in a better future for our children, for my daughter, Natalie, and her generation. In the words of Premier Leslie Frost, "We are laying the sure foundations for a greater and stronger Ontario."

This budget will help secure those foundations for all Ontarians — now and for future generations. In preparing it, I received assistance and advice from literally hundreds of Ontarians. I have considered their advice carefully and I thank them for their important contribution.

I want to thank all my colleagues, especially Premier Mike Harris, for his guidance and leadership.

I want to express my appreciation to the dedicated staff of the Ministry of Finance, led by Deputy Minister Michael Gourley; to my loyal personal staff, led by

Louise Girouard; and to my wife, Vicki, and daughter, Natalie, for their support and understanding.

Everyone knows that when we took office in June 1995, the provincial government was spending \$1 million more every hour than it was taking in in revenue, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

Thanks to our cautious and prudent approach, the deficit for this fiscal year just ended will be \$7.5 billion, an improvement of \$710 million over the 1996 budget plan.

For this fiscal year, our budget plan projects a deficit of \$6.6 billion. The deficit will be reduced further to \$4.8 billion next year, or some 58% less than the deficit we faced on taking office.

Our balanced budget plan will ensure that the deficit is eliminated entirely by the year 2000-01.

We have turned the corner towards a balanced budget.

While we remain on track for our balanced budget target, we are not about to sit by and watch our children's future swept away by a sea of debt.

It would be wrong to shackle our children with this financial burden. The debt threatens our economy and our public services. It means that the province must continue to pay more than \$9 billion in interest each and every year. That is more than the provincial government spends on education, and it is almost half the size of the budget for health care, our highest priority.

Once the budget is balanced, we will put in place a program to cut that debt, to ensure that our children will have the opportunities they deserve.

Ontario's economy is responding to the government's plan to make Ontario, once again, a province of jobs and opportunity.

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Our deficit reduction plan, along with those of other governments, has been a major factor in lowering interest rates. This record of fiscal responsibility by all governments in Canada is leading to improved business and consumer confidence and to more jobs.

The housing market continues to strengthen. The number of housing starts is projected to rise by 29% in 1997.

In last year's budget I introduced a rebate of land transfer tax for first-time buyers of new homes. This measure contributed to a 20.2% increase in the number of housing starts in 1996. More than 12,000 refunds were paid to first-time home buyers in the last 12 months.

On March 31, I announced that this successful rebate has been extended for another year.

The Ontario economy has responded in a renewed spirit of confidence and optimism.

In March alone, the Ontario economy created 45,600 net new jobs. Reflected in this increase is the largest monthly private sector job gain on record in the province of Ontario.

A wide range of indicators point to strong job growth in the coming months. The Ontario help wanted index, which measures job ads placed by employers seeking workers, is up 17.8% over the last 12 months. The last time the help wanted index grew that fast, job growth accelerated to nearly 200,000 jobs a year.

Private sector economists have identified the rising trends in consumer spending, housing activity, new orders and overtime worked as strong leading indicators of accelerating job growth.

The Royal Bank, for example, is predicting an increase of 700,000 net new jobs in Canada over the next two years. According to the bank, Ontario is expected to account for well in excess of its normal share of that job growth.

While this pace of job creation is an improvement, it is not acceptable to this government. Ontario's economy can and will do better.

We need to continue to cut taxes. We need less government. We need to continue to reduce the regulation and red tape that discourage business and we need to create an environment that encourages communities and small businesses to grow and create jobs.

Small business creates jobs, more than any other sector.

As noted by the committee on small business access to capital, small businesses need greater access to financing to help them grow and create jobs.

I would like to thank my colleagues Jim Brown, Tom Froese and John O'Toole, who served as members of the committee, as well as co-chairs Rob Sampson and Joe Spina for their ideas.

Following consultations on their recommendations, I am announcing today that the government will help with the creation of community small business investment funds.

I will introduce legislation to make these funds eligible as investments for labour-sponsored investment funds and the small business investment tax credit for banks.

To further encourage investment in these community small business investment funds, every dollar invested by an LSIF in these funds will count as two dollars in meeting their small business investment requirement. We will also be increasing that requirement from 10% to 15% for 1997 and 1998 and to 20% for 1999.

We have asked the federal government to recognize these investments as eligible for federal purposes.

To help both new and growing small businesses throughout the province, we will establish a network of enterprise centres for small business. These centres will provide coaching and mentoring in business planning, marketing, accounting and overall business strategy.

The current self-help office program of the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism will be consolidated with these enterprise centres.

I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Joe Spina, for his enthusiastic work in developing the enterprise concept.

Banks also have a role to play in small business development.

Last year bank profits reached more than \$6 billion, an increase of more than 20% from their record level of 1995. However, small business people tell us they continue to have problems getting the bank financing they need to grow and create jobs. These financing problems are the greatest for new and emerging small businesses.

The small business investment tax credit for banks announced in the 1996 budget as a temporary incentive allows banks to earn back a surtax introduced last year by investing in small businesses.

To help increase small business access to financing, I am announcing today a number of measures to enrich this earn-back program. I am also making it permanent. As of tomorrow:

The amount of tax that can be earned back will be increased from 20% to 75% for equity investments of \$50,000 or less;

Large financial institutions investing in community small business investment funds will be able to earn back tax at 40%;

Other large financial institutions will be allowed to earn back tax by lending to small business.

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce has taken a leadership role in providing loans to small businesses at below-prime interest rates. To recognize that leadership and to encourage other financial institutions to follow, the ability to earn back taxes will be extended to encourage loans of \$50,000 or less to small businesses at interest rates below prime.

These measures will help to provide lower cost financing and patient capital to more than 25,000 small businesses in Ontario. We will be consulting with small business and financial institutions on the implementation of details of these measures before introducing legislation.

We will parallel the federal government's extension of its capital tax surtax on large financial institutions. We will harmonize this capital tax with the federal large corporations capital tax. These changes will help reduce the compliance costs for business and administration costs for government.

Capital tax rates will be cut and special rules will be introduced to help credit unions and smaller financial institutions.

The new tax base and rates will become effective May 7, 1997, on a prorated basis.

The agricultural sector is an important contributor to jobs, growth and exports in Ontario. Our potential to export and create more jobs is a strength on which we want to build.

The budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been increased to \$405 million. We have maintained the ministry's share of program spending.

Today I am announcing the creation of a three-year, \$30-million rural job strategy.

Three million dollars will be used this summer to create 3,000 jobs for youth in rural Ontario.

In addition, this strategy will build on the success of Ontario's agrifood sector, which has raised exports by 160% over the last decade. It will include measures to increase exports by improving quality, marketing and the use of information technology.

Together with the enhanced support for small business lending announced today, the rural job strategy will provide the basis for job creation throughout rural Ontario.

Details of these actions will be announced by my colleague the Honourable Noble Villeneuve.

In the 1996 budget we introduced a temporary retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers. That rebate has been extended to provide additional assistance to the farming community over the next year.

We are reforming the taxation of farm land and replacing the farm tax rebate with a lower rate of property tax.

To help young people secure needed income and work experience, we will invest in new summer work opportunities. This budget provides an additional \$6 million to support summer employment. As a result of this added investment, we will help support 40,000 students this summer. This is an increase of 6,000 over the previously announced level and 10,000 over the number of student opportunities last year.

We will help graduates struggling to get experience in a tough job market. We will provide a 10% tax credit to private sector employers to create 45,000 internship jobs over the next three years for young people in Ontario.

Many of the new jobs being created in Ontario today are in small businesses and through self-employment. Working in cooperation with banks and private sector business organizations, the government will contribute \$2.5 million towards the cost of providing business startup loans for youth. These loans can be up to \$7,500 each and will support the creation of 3,000 jobs.

Our government will also support jobs for youth in key sectors of the economy by expanding the successful cooperative education tax credit introduced in last year's budget. This measure will provide students enrolled in leading-edge technology education programs, such as software development, with a 10% tax credit voucher for employers who hire them in jobs related to their program of study.

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To bring the latest in math, science and technology knowledge right into our classrooms, we will provide a similar grant to school boards that provide practical work placements for post-secondary students in these disciplines. These students will help teachers update teaching materials, introduce children to new technologies and serve as tutors in the classroom.

The highway system in northern Ontario and the gateways to the north are important to economic development. They provide critical links for the shipment of goods, for resource-based industries and for tourism activity, so important to the northern economy.

To promote the northern economy and create jobs, the government will provide an additional \$200 million over the next five years to accelerate highway construction. This will improve travel and safety on northern highways through the four-laning of certain key highways as well as the addition of passing lanes and paved shoulders for greater safety. My colleagues the Honourable Al Palladini and the Honourable Chris Hodgson will provide details.

Vehicle registration fees will be standardized in southern Ontario at \$74 per year. This will mean a reduction of \$16 per year for every driver in the Toronto area.

To make a contribution to the cost of upgrades to northern highways while recognizing the higher costs of fuel in the north, northern vehicle registration fees will be

set at \$37 per year, one half the level in the south. Every dollar, and then some, raised in the north will be invested in improvements to northern highways.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Sudbury, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: A modern and efficient water and sewer system is essential for a healthy environment and for economic development.

To that end, the province will provide \$200 million to help municipalities invest in these environmental facilities over the next three years. My colleague the Honourable Norm Sterling will provide details.

Keeping Ontario at the leading edge of science and technology will help the province create long-term jobs. However, Ontario's investment in research and development needs to keep pace with that of our competitors.

Ontario currently invests about 2% of its economy in research and development, compared to 1.6% for all of Canada. The United States, however, for example, spends about 2.5% and Japan, 2.8%.

Ontario's economy needs to invest more in R&D. During the last 10 years, two out of every three jobs created in the province of Ontario were created in knowledge- and technology-based industries.

We need to promote more collaboration and cooperation with the private sector and we need to stimulate greater competition for research excellence among Ontario's universities.

Ontario's universities are world leaders in many fields of research. To help the private sector take advantage of our world-class research capabilities in universities and other research institutions, I am announcing today the creation of a 10-year, \$3-billion R&D challenge fund.

The province will contribute \$500 million in new funding to the R&D challenge fund over the next 10 years.

This proposed approach distributes research support, not through a block grant, but rather through a process that provides incentives for excellence while at the same time including a market test of research relevance.

To participate, universities and other research institutions must match the provincial contribution in the first year of the fund. The amount required from participants will rise over the life of the fund.

The R&D challenge fund marks a new, competitively based approach to research funding. All proposals to the R&D challenge fund will have to meet a market test linked directly to future economic growth and job creation in the form of a one-third contribution from the private sector.

Teaching at the post-secondary level will be enhanced as a result of R&D activity and greater exposure to world-class research capabilities. The R&D challenge fund will also ensure that Ontario universities are able to compete effectively for funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

The new program will result in a total of \$3 billion of R&D in our universities and other research institutions over the next decade.

My colleagues the Honourable John Snobelen and the Honourable Bill Saunderson will consult on the implementation of the program.

To strengthen Ontario's R&D tax competitiveness and to forge stronger linkages between the private sector and non-profit research institutions in Ontario, I am announcing today the Ontario business-research institute tax credit. This credit will provide a 20% refundable tax credit for qualifying business-sponsored R&D performed by eligible Ontario universities, research hospitals and other non-profit research centres.

To encourage medical research in Ontario, I am extending the sales tax exemption for research and development equipment to non-profit medical research facilities, such as the Robarts Research Institute in London, Ontario.

Taxes should not discourage research and development and job creation.

We will also introduce changes to capital tax and the retail sales tax to remove barriers to research and development in Ontario.

In addition to R&D, the commercialization of new technology will help foster job creation and new investment. I am taking steps today to encourage the acquisition and commercialization of new technology by allowing firms to deduct immediately the costs of acquiring new technology and by eliminating Ontario's tax on royalty payments for foreign technology, such as computer software.

With these changes, Ontario will have one of the most competitive tax systems for research and development in the entire world.

We are responding to the challenges of a global economy. In total, over the next 10 years, the actions announced today will result in more than \$6 billion in private-sector-related research and development. That is an investment in jobs for our children.

Sheridan College is an outstanding example of excellence in the field of computer animation.

Companies such as the Disney Corp are establishing operations in Ontario to take advantage of the skills and talents of Ontario's computer animation and multimedia design graduates.

We want to build on the success of institutions like Sheridan College in promoting excellence and creating jobs. The government is prepared to commit up to \$12 million towards the creation of a new, world-class Animation, Communications Design and Technology Centre at Sheridan.

Interruption.

The Speaker: I would just remind the gallery that there's no applause from the gallery, please. Thank you.

Hon Mr Eves: This centre, which will incorporate digital and multimedia technologies as well as animation, will be established with private sector partners. These private firms will more than match the government's commitment. We expect that this new centre will be self-sustaining and able to repay the province's investment as it matures. We encourage other institutions to take up this challenge to develop world-class partnerships in their own areas of excellence.

In consultation with my colleague the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski, I am announcing a number of measures to support artistic activity and excellence in Ontario.

In recognition of the significance of cultural and artistic activities to the people and economy of the province, I am announcing today that the successful film and television tax credit will be increased to 20%. In addition, I am introducing a new 15% computer animation and special effects tax credit for productions in Ontario. Computer animation and special effects for Ontario films will qualify for 35% in tax credits all together. First-time filmmakers will continue to get a 30% film tax credit, and total credits of up to 45% will be available for computer animation in a first-time film.

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Just last week I had the opportunity to attend the opening of the studio and set for the new CBC prime-time show *Riverdale*. I spoke with Canadian actress Lynne Griffin, who has returned to Canada after 12 years of working in the United States.

This government wants to ensure that talented young people, like Lynne, trained in this province have the opportunity to work and create jobs here and to work on the global stage with such Canadian greats as Norman Jewison. We will consult with educators, the industry and artists to explore further ways to accomplish this goal for our thousands of talented young people.

Canadian authors and Ontario publishers have also established an international reputation for excellence in the arts. To support and build upon these achievements, I am announcing a refundable tax credit to assist Ontario companies that publish and promote first-time Canadian authors. This measure will provide a credit of 30% for pre-production and promotional costs and 15% for printing costs in Ontario.

We promised a new approach to health care, one that puts the needs of patients first.

We are making sure that the money we are allocating for health care provides services for patients and not for bureaucratic waste. By managing the system better, we are providing a higher quality, integrated community-based health care system for the future.

The government is more than meeting its commitment to maintain health care funding at \$17.4 billion. For 1997-98, Ministry of Health program funding to improve the quality of care will exceed \$17.8 billion. As well, \$450 million will be invested in restructuring and \$242 million will be provided for capital construction, bringing total funding for health care to \$18.5 billion.

Unlike the federal government, we have made support for health care our highest priority. The federal government has cut funding for health care to this province by \$2.1 billion since 1995-96. The federal government provides about \$797 for each person in Ontario for health care, less per capita than it provides in eight other provinces in Canada.

The priority our government places on comprehensive health care means that we have not only maintained health care funding despite the over \$2 billion federal cut; we have increased the provincial dollars and made up the federal share.

The recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission will allow this province to put in place the most modern and effective integrated health care system in this country. These actions will create a

better managed, more efficient, more coordinated health care system that better meets the needs of patients.

The investments needed to achieve this goal are substantial. Over the next five years, \$2.7 billion will be invested in the restructuring of our community-based health care system.

We are keeping the promise to reinvest.

Our goal in the restructuring of our health care system is to put the needs of patients first by creating the most comprehensive and effective health care services in this country. During pre-budget consultations, we heard that the pace of these restructuring needs has to be kept in line with the activities occurring in our communities.

We are listening to the advice of communities and health care professionals. Planned savings for reinvestment, to be achieved in 1998-99, will be rescheduled so that they more closely coincide with the implementation of restructuring.

The Minister of Health will be consulting with communities and those involved in health care delivery to determine how best to coordinate achievement of these savings with the restructuring activities in our communities.

The key to improving the quality of health care is the skill, expertise and caring of the people who work in the health care system.

We will ensure that special skills and knowledge are available throughout Ontario by helping to create networks of information. These networks will make best practices and innovations available quickly and broadly, providing caregivers the knowledge needed to help patients across the province.

These networks will allow us to ensure that quality care in areas such as women's health, orthopaedic care, and AIDS treatment and prevention are available to more people, in more places, than ever before.

Just recently, the Premier announced the establishment of Cancer Care Ontario to link and integrate cancer services throughout the province.

As promised, we are reinvesting in priority health care services. This year, \$138.5 million in additional funds will be provided to ensure access to essential services in health care facilities, including improved cardiac strategy, increased support for dialysis strategy, increased funding for transplants for adults and children, enhanced community-based services for mental health, and \$50 million in new funding for neurotrauma initiatives.

Details of these investments will be provided by my colleague the Honourable Jim Wilson.

Classroom education in this province needs improvement.

Between 1985 to 1995, school board spending grew by some 82%. Education mill rates rose by 80% and school property tax revenues rose by more than 120%. We know this did not result from increasing enrolment, as that grew by only 16%.

School board spending and taxing were out of control.

The solutions for the problems in the education system are the same as for the province itself. We have to eliminate unproductive spending. We have to stop the uncontrolled growth in taxes.

That is the problem and we are fixing it.

The direction in which we are going is clear.

We will have less government in the education system.

We will reduce the number of school boards by almost half.

There will be fewer trustees — less than half of the 1,900 we have now.

We have to build a new and better system. That requires investment. We will make that investment.

We are investing in the classroom.

We have committed \$650 million for primary and secondary school capital over the next two years. These funds will renew existing schools and build new schools.

Through this investment, more than 1,000 portable classrooms will be eliminated and replaced with much-needed permanent facilities.

We will continue to invest in better education for our children.

For several years, many graduating teachers have been unable to secure full-time jobs in their chosen profession. Their skills and dedication are essential to the future of our children. We cannot afford to waste their talents.

I am inviting the teaching profession to join with us in providing an early retirement benefit for teachers to renew the profession. As a result of this initiative, up to 6,500 new teachers would have the opportunity to bring their skills and energy to the students in the classrooms of this province.

This is an opportunity that benefits teachers and students:

It is an opportunity to honour the efforts of long-time teachers who now want to take on other challenges;

It is an opportunity for graduating teachers to begin a full-time career in the classroom;

It is an opportunity for experienced teachers to benefit from the energy and enthusiasm that newly trained colleagues will bring to the classroom; and

It is an opportunity for children in thousands of classes across the province to benefit from a renewed classroom.

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We have made a provision of \$250 million in the 1996-97 fiscal year for the province's share of the cost of this \$500-million initiative. The early retirement program would be paid from the teachers' pension plan, which has experienced gains of up to \$2 billion that can and should be used for renewing the education system. We are inviting the teachers to join us on an equal 50-50 basis to provide this benefit and renewal.

The Ontario student opportunities trust funds, OSOTF, have more than doubled their \$100-million target set out in last year's budget. These funds were established to allow universities and colleges to assist academically qualified individuals facing financial barriers to post-secondary education.

Reports from universities and colleges show that cash and pledges received by March 31 now total over \$250 million. The province will match this amount, creating an endowment of one-half billion dollars that will assist over 166,000 students over the next decade.

This successful program has permitted Ontario's colleges, many of which have never engaged in fund-raising for student aid, to raise approximately \$18 million, creating \$36 million in trust funds.

Because colleges have a less developed tradition of fund-raising, they faced special obstacles in taking advantage of this program. The government recognizes the challenges faced by colleges and wants to encourage their development of fund-raising as a permanent activity. I am announcing today that colleges of applied arts and technology can continue to receive pledges and donations until March 31, 1998.

Too few students with learning disabilities get the help they need to make the transition to college or university.

To help these students realize their potential, we will establish pilot projects at the college and university level, the first of their kind, to provide real help to learning-disabled students in a meaningful way. Dr Bette Stephenson, the pioneering former Minister of Education and my part-time mentor, will head a task force to design and implement these projects.

We will provide \$30 million over the next five years to carry out this initiative and implement the recommendations of her task force.

The courage and determination shown by my late son, Justin, and thousands of others like him provided me with the inspiration to provide this much-needed initiative so that all young students, regardless of their financial health, can have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

This government is committed to assisting students to achieve their educational goals. Funding for the Ontario student assistance program has been increased by more than 25%, or over \$100 million, since 1995-96. This year spending on student assistance will total \$505 million.

We are committed to providing appropriate and adequate support for students who need it. This means that the student loan support must better reflect the rewards that students realize from public investment in their education.

We are committed to working with the federal government to implement an income-contingent student loan program in time for September 1998.

The Premier recently announced \$45 million in reinvestments to support children, including speech and language services and early intervention to protect children at risk of abuse and neglect.

The government also provides \$344 million in child care fee subsidies to help more than 70,000 children in this province. However, too many other children and families in similar circumstances receive absolutely no help at all from the subsidy system. That's not fair.

Today I am announcing a new child care tax credit to assist working families who are not benefiting from the current institutional child care system.

Our credit will provide assistance with child care costs to some 90,000 families and 125,000 children. Families with two children will be eligible for this credit up to incomes of \$40,000.

For 1997, this credit will provide up to \$400 per child under the age of 7 and will decline in value for families with incomes above \$20,000 per year.

This credit will provide an immediate \$40 million in assistance to lower-income working families with child care expenses and will be financed from the \$40-million enhancement announced in the 1996 budget.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): It's not there.

Hon Mr Eves: It is now.

Our child care credit will build on our planned improvements to the child care system resulting from the child care review and consultations with municipalities carried out by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The new system will provide more choice to parents and will help child care providers make care more affordable. More families will receive assistance, with priority being given to families who need help to start or stay at work.

Ontario supports the interprovincial initiative for a national child benefit. Under this initiative, the federal government will contribute to part of the cost of income security for children. The provinces have agreed to invest the funds formerly spent on social assistance in programs that help children in low-income families.

For our part, we will redirect more than \$150 million in provincial funds by expanding programs that help families with children to find and keep jobs. One hundred million dollars will be used to enhance our child care tax credit for working families as the national child benefit is phased in.

I would like to thank my colleague the Honourable Janet Ecker for her leadership on these important measures to help children and families.

In addition to providing help with child care costs, we will reduce taxes further for low-income families, particularly those with children. The Ontario tax reduction program will be enriched to reduce taxes for 30,000 families. Of these, 20,000 families will now pay no Ontario income tax at all.

This means that in our first two budgets we have provided an enhanced tax cut for 285,000 low-income individuals and families.

In total, the Ontario tax reduction cuts taxes for 530,000 individuals and families and eliminates Ontario income tax entirely for another 655,000 individuals and families. The federal government, I might add, is collecting income taxes from more than 55% of the low-income families paying no Ontario tax whatsoever.

The protection of children is a priority for this government. The government has supported the Child Mortality Task Force and welcomed its preliminary report.

As an initial step, this budget provides \$15 million to respond to the task force and to protect vulnerable children.

We know that more must be done. The government looks forward to the final report of the task force and the recommendations from inquests currently under way. We are prepared to take the necessary steps to ensure that our children are protected.

We will provide an additional \$5 million to accelerate implementation of enhanced enforcement measures to collect moneys owed by delinquent parents. My colleague the Honourable Charles Harnick will provide details.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): That's a funny budget. They raid the system and then —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, come to order, please, and Sudbury East. Thank you.

1650

Hon Mr Eves: Our plan places a high priority on improving safety in our communities and dealing with violent crime.

Parents are rightly concerned that their children be protected when participating in community sponsored and supervised activities. Recent highly publicized events, however, have undermined the confidence that some parents have in the safety of these activities.

The Ontario Provincial Police currently provide at no cost literally thousands of checks of police records for volunteer organizations. It is expected that all local police forces will join in this important community safety initiative in support of volunteers. To complement the community safety initiatives of the police, the government will assist community groups through the volunteer linkages program to better screen and supervise volunteers.

My colleague the Honourable Dianne Cunningham will be announcing a comprehensive strategy which will strengthen our efforts to prevent violence against women. We will spend an additional \$27 million over the next four years to support women and their families in breaking the cycle of violence.

In order to promote safety in our communities, the government will work with municipalities to help identify and establish community safety zones. Fines levied for infractions committed in these zones would be doubled.

These zones could be portions of roads where the safety of children is paramount, such as school zones and crossings, school bus stops, day care centres, children's parks or areas of roadways with high accident rates.

Fines for other activities, such as the sale of cigarettes or liquor to minors, that put young people at risk will also be doubled.

These double fines will contribute revenue to the victims' justice fund, which provides funding for programs and services helping victims of crime.

The Campbell report has identified a number of needed improvements in the way in which police services work together to investigate and apprehend serial predators. The government is acting on these recommendations. We will provide \$25 million over the next five years to improve information sharing capacities of police services to better coordinate the efforts of all participants in these investigations.

Sometimes the victims of violence also include the survivors of those who have lost their lives protecting others. People in Ontario are justifiably outraged that the killer of a police officer can receive an education in prison at the taxpayers' expense while the children and spouse of the slain officer have no support for their education.

That is not right and it is not fair.

To correct this injustice, we will provide \$5 million this year to create an endowment for the families of police, firefighters and other public safety officers killed in the line of duty. This endowment will fund the cost of tuition and books for post-secondary education. Private donations will enhance this endowment.

In addition, the victim support line pilot, scheduled to end in June of this year, will be extended until March 31,

1998, at a cost of \$1.5 million. Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide an automated notification service to victims of crime.

I would like to thank my colleague the Honourable Bob Runciman for his significant contribution to community safety.

In last year's budget, I announced crown foundation legislation to assist in mobilizing resources for important health, cultural and social organizations.

In the last year, 19 crown foundations have been created. These consist of one research organization, eight hospitals and 10 arts and culture organizations including the Stratford and Shaw festivals and the National Ballet of Canada foundations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague and parliamentary assistant Isabel Bassett for her hard work in making this measure so successful and for her excellent advice on this and other issues.

However, in its most recent budget the federal government actually reduced the amount of a gift to a crown foundation that can be claimed for an income tax credit from 100% of income in a year to 75%. While that budget followed Ontario's lead by providing incentives for conventional charitable giving, its treatment of crown foundations is totally inappropriate.

We have asked the federal government to administer for Ontario a tax credit to address this problem. This credit would ensure that those wishing to make gifts above the federal maximum will pay no more Ontario tax than they did before the unfortunate federal decision.

The federal government, for its part, has said no. Our request means not one single cent in cost to the federal government, since we would pay for the administration and only Ontario tax would be affected. It also means that the federal government is attempting to prevent Ontario from encouraging giving to charitable foundations by making changes to our own provincial tax system.

The best job creation program is a tax cut.

In addition to the province of Ontario, the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan have each introduced several tax cuts in their budgets.

The federal government says it has no flexibility to cut taxes. Now, a little over two months later, we hear media reports that its 1996-97 deficit may be as much as \$6 billion lower than reported at budget time, just the amount to be spent, I might add, in red book II. I'm sure the two amounts are purely coincidental. It is missing an opportunity to cut taxes and create jobs.

It will come as no surprise that I believe that one of the first federal tax cuts should be to employment insurance premiums. At the current employee premium rate of \$2.90 on every \$100 earned, Canadian employees and employers are paying \$5 billion more per annum than they are receiving in benefits.

An excessive EI premium rate is particularly damaging to the province of Ontario. Ontario businesses and employees pay \$4 billion more in premiums than they receive in EI program benefits. This means that contributions from people in Ontario account for 80% of the \$5-billion annual surplus. That is unfair.

Studies tell us, and the federal government, that up to 200,000 jobs have been lost nationwide because of high payroll taxes.

Even federal Finance Minister Paul Martin has recognized the drag that payroll taxes place on job creation. On August 30, 1994, Mr Martin said, "High payroll taxes are a cancer on the economy." We agreed then and we agree now.

There has to be some equity and fairness in the way the federal government treats taxpayers in the province of Ontario. Take the advantage of how Ontarians receive their fair share of EI benefits when they are unemployed —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, I know the honourable members opposite don't want to hear this, but these are the facts.

It is only fair that if Ontarians contribute a fair share to the EI program they should receive a fair share of benefits when they become unemployed.

1700

In 1996, if you were a resident living in New Brunswick and you needed EI benefits, you would receive \$13,100 from the federal government; if you lived in British Columbia, you would receive \$6,500; but if you lived in the province of Ontario, you would receive only \$4,800. That is not fair. Ontarians believe that unemployed workers in Ontario should have the same federal support for training as they do in other provinces.

If the federal government is prepared to treat the unemployed in Ontario fairly, we are prepared to sign a training agreement today.

The people of Ontario deserve a better deal. The fact is that the federal government provides less support to individuals in Ontario than they do to people in other parts of the country. They deserve to be treated fairly.

Unless the federal government is prepared to address these inequities, Ontario will have to seriously consider withdrawing from the current arrangement. The federal government is costing Ontario taxpayers well in excess of \$100 million each and every single year by their inequitable treatment. We have begun to seek advice on this matter to protect Ontario taxpayers' best interests.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: I see I've touched a nerve over there, Mr Speaker.

In January, the Ontario government proposed a new arrangement for provincial-municipal responsibilities. This plan was designed to bring fairness to the funding of education in Ontario and improve the quality of education by providing a fair distribution of funding across the province.

In proposing its arrangement, the government had several objectives in mind:

To reduce taxes by ending the spiralling costs of education in the province;

To reduce taxes by rationalizing the delivery of services between the provincial and municipal levels of governments;

To bring tax fairness to the people of this province regardless of the municipality in which they live.

This government clearly stated those objectives and indicated that they were willing to listen to other ways of achieving them. We said, on page 20 of the Common Sense Revolution, that "we are unconditionally committed to reaching our goals, but we are very open to discussing how we get there. If there are better ideas out there about how to cut spending, reduce waste and improve efficiency, we want to hear them."

Following several months of discussions, municipal representatives offered an alternative solution based on a coalition of several groups reflecting a broad cross-section of interests. We have listened.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, I'm going to warn you. Stop interrupting. And the members of the caucus, please quit interrupting. I want to hear the finance minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Interjection: O-o-o-o.

The Speaker: I don't know who did that, but that's inappropriate and completely out of order, and I ask whoever did it to withdraw and come to order. That was unacceptable.

Hon Mr Eves: Last Thursday, the government accepted the municipal alternative and will now proceed with the necessary implementation. I want to thank my colleague the Honourable Al Leach for his hard work in making this agreement a reality.

Part of our plan to reduce the role and size of government is getting people off welfare and into the workplace.

This government has increased the incentive to work, reduced benefits to realistic levels, introduced mandatory workfare and cracked down on welfare fraud.

Since June of 1995, the welfare caseload in the province of Ontario has fallen by 14.4%: Some 193,000 fewer people rely on social assistance today than when this government took office.

My colleague Bart Maves, MPP for Niagara Falls, has introduced legislation to improve accountability in the public sector. With the benefit of his advice and comments, I will introduce the Public Sector Accountability Act.

This act will require that organizations:

Report their financial activities in accordance with the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants;

Adopt policies that ensure that the private sector has an open opportunity to compete to provide services to their organizations; and

Adopt and publicly report on organizational performance using private and public sector benchmarks.

Cutting taxes and ensuring that taxpayers receive efficient and effective public services is an important part of tax fairness. It is also essential that people pay their fair share of taxes so that their burden is not passed on to their neighbours.

The underground economy is one way in which some try to avoid paying their fair share. In the last year, we have added 191 audit and collections staff to improve the integrity of our tax system and to make sure that taxes

are paid if they are owed. They are expected to recover an additional \$80 million a year by 1998-99.

Today I am announcing further actions which are expected to result in improved collections of up to \$100 million more per year by the fiscal year 2000-01.

Further amendments will be made to improve tax enforcement, to modernize and simplify the tax system and to streamline the operations of government.

I have asked my colleague and friend the new parliamentary assistant, Bill Grimmett, MPP for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, to look into ways to simplify administrative procedures for small business.

Details of these measures are provided in budget papers B and C.

A tax cut is the best job creation program.

We have promised to cut personal income tax rates by 30% over three years to create jobs. Today we are delivering the next two steps of that tax cut.

Effective July 1, Ontario's personal income tax rate will be reduced to 47% of the basic federal tax from the current 49%.

We will cut taxes again on January 1, 1998. The income tax rate will be reduced further, to 45%.

This means that Ontario's rate of income tax will have been reduced by 22.4% since 1995.

In last year's budget, I announced a three-year plan to cut the employer health tax by completely exempting the first \$400,000 of payroll from the EHT. This marks the second year of our plan and when fully implemented on January 1, 1999, 270,000 or 88% of all Ontario employers will no longer have to pay this job-killing payroll tax.

Our tax-cutting plan is working.

The benefits of our plan to cut taxes are clear:

Ninety-one per cent of all taxpayers will see an Ontario tax cut of 30% or more;

All taxpayers with incomes of \$60,000 or less will see their Ontario tax rate fall by 30% or more.

This means that with the cuts announced today, an auto worker earning \$84,000 will get a tax cut of \$1,875. When the tax cut is fully implemented, this same auto worker will receive a \$2,505 tax reduction, 25.4%.

The best job creation program is a tax cut. This is our plan and it is working.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): How many auto workers make \$84,000 a year?

Hon Mr Eves: The average one, Howard.

This budget continues the implementation of the government's plan.

This government is committed to doing what it said it would do. Such commitment requires the strong leadership and courage of conviction that our Premier, Mike Harris, exemplifies. His direction and foresight have been instrumental in developing this plan.

This plan keeps us on track for a balanced budget by the fiscal year 2000-01 and makes government more accountable to taxpayers.

It invests in the economy by helping small and medium-sized businesses in communities across the province get access to the financing they need to grow and create jobs.

This plan makes record investments in research and development to create jobs for the future. It establishes a stronger partnership in Ontario between the private and public sector, creating a powerful force for innovation and prosperity.

It builds on the foundation in Ontario for the most competitive research and development in the entire world.

It promotes growth of agricultural exports, job creation and economic development in our rural communities.

It makes communities safer by protecting children and our neighbourhoods.

Families are an important part of our community. This document assists hardworking families. It provides help for more young families with child care expenses.

This plan invests in education. It invests where the money is needed — in the classroom. It provides for renewal of the teaching profession. It helps students realize their full academic potential.

The plan ensures our commitment to provide quality health care for all Ontarians now and in the future.

It allows taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money by cutting personal income taxes. In total, we have cut taxes 30 times in less than two years.

Our plan creates jobs for the future.

We have an obligation to the future of Ontario. My daughter, Natalie, and her younger generation will accomplish things that some never imagined possible.

This document lays the foundation for a better tomorrow by investing in the future today.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Hon David Johnson: I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JOB GROWTH AND TAX REDUCTION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA CROISSANCE DE L'EMPLOI ET LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to stimulate job growth, to reduce taxes and to implement other measures contained in the 1997 Budget / Projet de loi 129, Loi visant à stimuler la croissance de l'emploi, à réduire les impôts et à mettre en oeuvre d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Minister?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I think I've expounded on those measures quite enough in the last hour. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? The House is now adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1715.

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Wednesday 7 May 1997

Mercredi 7 mai 1997



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 May 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 mai 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Les députés francophones du Parti libéral de l'Ontario se sont opposés au projet de loi 104. Au lendemain du dépôt du budget, on peut voir que l'on avait raison de s'y opposer. Dans le budget déposé hier, comme dans le projet de loi 104, il n'y a aucune aide financière pour la création d'un nouveau conseil scolaire francophone.

Les francophones attendent avec impatience la nomination des membres au sein de la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, et j'espère que le ministre Snobelen ne fera pas la même erreur que le ministre de la Santé, qui avait omis de nommer une personne francophone au sein de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé. N'oubliez pas, Monsieur le Ministre, que les francophones veulent participer et être inclus dans le processus.

Je désire profiter de la Semaine de l'éducation pour introduire deux étudiantes de l'école Sainte-Trinité de Rockland, du Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française de Prescott et Russell, qui ont été choisies pour prendre part au programme éducatif qui est en vigueur depuis l'année dernière. J'ai donc le plaisir de présenter aux membres de l'Assemblée législative Martine Castonguay et Stéphanie Chrétien, qui sont ici avec nous. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

TELEMARKETING FRAUD

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Down in Welland-Thorold, and indeed across the province, folks are getting personalized letters, computer printouts, in the mail indicating that they're going to enjoy great prosperity and rewards; in this case, a gentleman from King Street in Welland, \$10,500. But when you look at the fine print, you see this is a 1-900 scam, a little bit like yesterday's budget. When you look at the fine print, all it does is cost these folks big bucks, on average \$40 to \$50 each, as they phone that 1-900 number to collect their prize, which ends up being, inevitably, \$1.37.

This is an old scam, the 1-900 scam, and unfortunately among the accomplices to scumbuckets like DAMI, Direct American Marketers Inc, who are running this scam and fleecing seniors and the poor, are Bell Canada and other telephone carriers, because Bell Canada and other telephone carriers share in those big profits based on \$4.99 a minute on the 1-900s. So neither Bell nor the other

carriers want to go to the CRTC to get permission or the power to cut operators, fleecers, crooks like DAMI loose from the 1-900 system.

I think it's important that we advise all people in all our communities not to fall prey to these sorts of scams like the 1-900 scam. I also today want to prevail upon the Attorney General and this government to enter into discussions with their federal counterparts to develop genuine controls on the use of 1-900 numbers so that crooks like DAMI can no longer operate and fleece our poor and our seniors.

QUINTE BALLET SCHOOL

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I rise today to congratulate the Quinte Ballet School, located in my riding of Quinte.

On May 3 my wife, Cheryl, and I were guests of the Quinte Ballet School for its silver anniversary gala. The performance, held at the Centennial Auditorium in Belleville, was celebrating the school's tremendously successful 25-year history.

As one of only four professional ballet schools in Canada, the Quinte Ballet School is a unique and important asset to my community. The school attracts students to Belleville from all across Canada, ranging from 10 to 20 years of age, to pursue their dream of a career in dance. Many of the school's graduates have attained the dream of performing for such prestigious dance companies as the National Ballet of Canada.

The school consistently achieves excellence in professional dance and has gained considerable recognition in the past 25 years, with Annette av Paul and Karen Kain as honorary patrons.

Besides teaching professional dance, the Quinte Ballet School also provides recreational programs involving 100 local residents.

On behalf of all residents of the Quinte area, I want to thank Brian Scott, David Scott, Tom Dietzel and everyone else involved in making the Quinte Ballet School such a success. Through their efforts, the city of Belleville has gained a prominent place in Canada's culture.

BUDGET

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): When it comes to the north, the Harris government should hang its head in shame after yesterday's budget. Not only have they made an additional \$2.5 billion worth of cuts, not only have they succeeded in eliminating over 2,000 jobs in the north, not only have they continued to discontinue the northern support grant, which helps us provide extra money for the extra costs of providing services, and not only have they

closed the resident geologist offices, but now the Harris government has once again turned its back on the north and imposed a new tax on northern drivers.

The vehicle registration tax is being forced on the hardworking people of northern Ontario. This is the only government in recent history not to recognize the higher costs of operating a vehicle in the north.

All governments before have recognized this and have tried in different ways to make sure the north is treated fairly. But not Mike Harris, not Ernie Eves, not the Tories. Mike Harris says, "Tax the north." Ernie Eves says, "Tax the north." The Tories say, "Tax the north." The only region in Ontario to get a new tax imposed on it in this budget is the north. The north has been punished again.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Yesterday this government introduced what they tried to pass off as a feel-good budget. For the thousands of unemployed people in this province, this budget does nothing to make them feel good.

This budget fails to produce anything tangible for job creation. We have seen, over two years of the Harris government, the job crisis worsening. There are 16,000 more people unemployed today than there were two years ago. Over the last two years, only 100,000 jobs have been created. At the same time, the labour force has grown by the same amount, leaving the unemployment rate at the same level.

The experience of the last few years illustrates that the economy can grow without any growth in jobs. Standard calculations for job growth based on economic growth no longer have any meaning. In 1995 and 1996 the economy grew by a cumulative 5.2%, which resulted in only 100,000 jobs and produced the same level of unemployment.

What did this budget do for young people? The youth employment programs of the Harris government in reality represent a cut in funding of close to \$20 million. In 1994-95 there was \$60 million spent on youth employment programs by the Ontario government; this year, only \$40 million.

It's time this government came up with some real solutions, not just their rhetoric about tax cuts and job creation. This province needs a real plan for job creation, not simply a tax cut that puts money in the pockets of the wealthy.

1340

LINDA BARKER

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I wish to bring to the attention of the House that there are still pioneers among us in the province of Ontario. The Ontario Cattlemen's Association recently held its annual elections. The person elected president, a farmer near Hagersville in Haldimand-Norfolk, is the first woman president of the Cattlemen.

Linda Barker has been involved with the cattlemen's association for 13 years. She was first involved with the Haldimand Cattlemen's Association and was elected a provincial director in 1987. Linda Barker is one of the unsung heroines you find in every community who always has time to volunteer for one more thing and has been

involved in almost every agricultural event in her community while operating a purebred Charolais operation and rearing her four children.

This also marks the 35th anniversary of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. I wish to recognize the contribution of cattle and beef producers to improving Ontario's beef industry.

I've had the privilege of getting to know Linda during my time as a representative for Norfolk. I grew up with dual-purpose polled shorthorn cattle. I'm proud to stand before this House to congratulate the Ontario Cattlemen's Association on its decision to elect Linda Barker as their president, the first woman to hold that post and a true volunteer.

BUDGET

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): With all the partisan whining, finger-pointing and blaming others in the Harris government's budget speech yesterday, members will likely be astounded to learn who said the following about the previous NDP government:

"All we have heard from the government is whining that we need more money from a bankrupt federal government. I believe that it is time for us to stop whining. It is time for us to fix that which is broken right here in our own province."

"So we can continue to complain that other levels of government are not pulling their weight. We can blame local levels of government or we can blame the federal government or we can turn our energies towards making Ontario more competitive...."

"So it is actually a disgrace when the Premier of Ontario spends his time whining, pointing fingers, blaming others. That is not the legacy, that is not the history, of this province that I grew up in and that will not be the legacy and history of this province when we bring common sense back to it."

Those, believe it or not, are the words of Mike Harris in opposition. Yes, our own Mike Harris.

His colleague Conservative MPP Gary Carr was right on when he said of the previous Premier:

"This wasn't a statement, this was public whining. In Ontario, we have always been the leaders in Confederation. We have now become the whiners in Confederation...."

"The public doesn't want partisanship or gamesmanship, they want results."

Now when they are in power and can control things, all they do is whine again. Don't you take responsibility for anything you do? People want cooperation, not confrontation.

Mike and Gary, you were right.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Yesterday we saw another magic show. We saw another budget of smoke and mirrors. Let me give you a few examples.

Health care: The government lauds that it is spending more than any other government in the history of this province on health care. What they don't tell you is that there's not one new penny of money being spent on health care services to people. They've taken restructuring costs, which are capital costs, put them in the operating budget,

which is opposed to all accounting principles, and said that it's new services to people. Not one penny.

What about the pretence of new spending in areas of programs for prevention of violence against women or child abuse? What they don't tell you is that it's a drop in the bucket compared to the cuts they made last year. They're spending less than previous governments.

What about the northern vehicle registration? They laud that they've set it at \$37, one half of the rate of southerners. How cynical. What they didn't tell you is that the NDP government reduced it altogether to zero, eliminated it, in recognition of higher fuel costs and transportation costs in the north. You've increased it, imposed a new tax of \$37, and you want northerners to thank you. I'm sure they'll thank you appropriately.

The greatest cynical move of all is on child care. You say you're creating a new child care tax and the finance minister said yesterday he is spending now, immediately, the \$40 million you announced and didn't spend last year. But the child care tax credit is for 1997. People will file their taxes in 1998. You'll spend the money in 1998 that you announced in 1996.

What a sham. Smoke and mirrors.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I rise today to bring attention to a serious concern which I know is shared by many people in Ontario. That concern is with regard to section 745 of the Criminal Code. Otherwise known as the "faint hope" clause, this section allows convicted killers to apply for early release from prison before serving their full 25-year sentence. Our government, along with police officers and chiefs, crown attorneys and groups such as CAVEAT, has called for an immediate repeal of this section of the Criminal Code. The federal government refuses to act.

Seventeen years ago, Craig Munro and his brother shot Metro Toronto Police Constable Michael Sweet during a robbery at a Queen Street restaurant. Constable Sweet, a father of three young daughters, took a shotgun blast in the chest and lay on the floor for an hour and a half, drowning in his own blood. During this time, Munro and his brother drank alcohol and did heroin.

Munro was sentenced to life in prison. During his years in jail, Munro showed no sign of remorse for this heinous crime until 18 months ago. What a coincidence. Now Munro is applying for early release under section 745 of the Criminal Code.

Ontarians know that public safety is a top priority with this government. It should be the same for the federal government. I urge the federal Liberals to repeal this loophole and make a solid commitment to protecting the safety of all Canadians. For convicted killers like this, life should mean life.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday you introduced

another budget in this House, and to listen to some of the stories and some of the spin doctors, you would think that in terms of health care in the province our ship had come in, all of our wishes were about to be granted and nothing could be better.

I want to bring your attention to the perspective of a patient in an Ontario hospital, no one in particular, but right now that patient is concerned because when he or she rings the buzzer, the nurse doesn't show up. That patient is concerned because he or she is afraid. They've heard stories, and they're true stories, of a patient who died in a hallway unbeknownst to the medical personnel. They've heard stories about somebody who was in pain and couldn't get medication in a hospital. They've heard stories about lengthy waiting lists for surgery. If you cut away all the hype and all the rhetoric, the fact of the matter is you are still proceeding to cut \$1.3 billion from Ontario hospital budgets. How does knowing all of that make me feel any better as a patient?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Health would be pleased to respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Just to clarify the record, because all the media reports seem to have it right and only the honourable member seems to have it wrong, health care spending in this fiscal year will be \$17.8 billion. That's \$400 million more than when we came into office 22 months ago and \$800 million more than you promised in your red book in the last provincial election.

Secondly, so that hospitals can fully protect patient services, the finance minister and the government have set aside \$450 million in additional restructuring moneys this year, \$850 million in additional restructuring moneys next year, for a total of \$1.3 billion, and over the next five years the government is prepared to spend over \$2 billion to make sure that restructuring is done right and that we prepare our hospital system for the growing and aging population.

Mr McGuinty: Ontarians should know that the only new money that was announced for health care today, save and except \$1 million for additional operating budget, which is nothing in the grand scheme of things, is effectively for wreckers' fees. That's to shut down hospitals and to pay the severance costs that are going to be connected with firing 15,000 Ontario nurses. Knowing that lends no comfort whatsoever to patients who presently find themselves in Ontario hospitals and lends no comfort to Ontarians who may end up there at some point in the future. Not one cent is going to improve the quality of health care within our hospitals; not one cent is going to get patients out of hallways; not one cent is going to go towards reducing waiting lists.

Minister, you should know that you can play around with a lot of things in Ontario, but when you play around with health care, you're playing with fire. That's why the polls show, and people on the street know in their heart of hearts, that they are extremely uncomfortable with your handling of health care in Ontario. The only way you can escape that is to restore the cuts. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Wilson: The health care budget is up; it's not been cut one penny. In operating dollars this year it's up \$400 million, in spite of the \$2.1-billion cut from your

federal cousins. In addition to that, so that patient services are fully protected and enhanced — and that's the new level of patient services, by the way, with our cardiac care announcement, our dialysis announcements, our new hip and knee replacements — that money is flowed as part of the \$17.8 billion.

In addition, the extra restructuring money committed, which is up to \$2.7 billion over the next five years, will follow the Health Services Restructuring Commission's directives of which, I remind you, their number one principle is to improve and enhance accessibility and patient care. To say their directives have nothing to do with improving the health care system or patient care in this province is clearly wrong, because that is what motivates the government and that is what motivates the commission. Every time you bring up a story about the status quo, about a problem in today's system, I say that's why you are providing your own proof of why this system needs to be restructured.

1350

Mr McGuinty: When I bring up stories about patients who are at risk in Ontario hospitals, that is your status quo that you created as a result of your cuts. You're making things worse. You can dance around it, you can try to get over it, you can try to get under it, but the fact remains that you are cutting \$1.3 billion from Ontario hospital budgets. We thought, we hoped and we prayed that yesterday you would have seized the opportunity and said, "I'm not going to proceed with the final round of cuts because we understand that we are already causing pain." Patients are at risk in Ontario hospitals because of your actions, because of the government's actions, and nobody else's.

There is no hope in yesterday's budget for patients. That's the bottom line, no hope for people like Susan Kellar who went to the hospital, to find her father dead on a stretcher in a hallway and none of the medical personnel knew about it, and it's not their fault.

If you want people to take you seriously, Minister, you're going to have to put the money back into the system. Would you, at minimum, cancel the last \$500 million of cuts?

Hon Mr Wilson: Clearly, all the way along, all the savings we've seen from hospitals, which is a very small amount of money compared to the tremendous new investments, every dollar and more has gone back into the system. Today we know from our hospitals that clearly they have said patient services have not been affected; in fact, we're on the road to improving patient services. If we had kept the way you were going or the way the previous government was going, I could see a day in a couple of years, as more and more senior citizens come on stream, where patient services were going to be adversely affected, and we have to restructure.

David MacKinnon, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, said about yesterday's budget: "This should go a long way to reassuring the public that the system will remain stable during this time of massive change. While change is necessary, it must be managed in a way that does not affect access to and quality of patient care." David MacKinnon, the head of the Ontario Hospital Association, has confidence in our vision for health care. I wish the honourable members would pay attention.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, I want to speak to you from a child's perspective regarding your budget. I looked through the clippings today and through the television clips last night and not a single person under the age of 10 was interviewed. I want to raise some issues on their behalf today.

You will know that this spring and this summer eight inquests will be heard into the deaths of children in Ontario as a result of abuse or neglect. I have asked in this House time and time again that you restore the funding in the amount of \$17 million that you stole from children's aid societies. Inquests that are being held around the province are making it clear that children's aid society workers do not have the numbers to keep up with the workload. Premier, I want you to tell me, what kind of lifeline did you throw kids in Ontario, who are being abused, yesterday in that budget? What did you do for them?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think any objective observer and analyst of the budget would say that this overwhelmingly was a budget for children. Second, I think they would say that here is a government that has targeted the most vulnerable in our society and said, "They are our first priority to assist and help, to help level the playing field, to help and assist."

I think any objective observer would also say that the Minister of Community and Social Services in this government is one of the most compassionate and caring ministers that children could possibly have, coupled with a Minister of Finance unparalleled in his sense of fairness and decency for those who are disadvantaged the most in this province.

I want to say to you that while you can rant and rail away and pull stuff out of the air, never in a budget or —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: It seems to me that the Premier, in rushing to the defence of the Minister of Community and Social Services, doth protest too much. The fact of the matter is that when it comes to kids in Ontario who are the subject of abuse, you have left them high and dry. You've effectively said: "You're on your own. You're out there. You don't lobby me, you don't write me, you don't vote for me — too bad."

I want to talk to you about child care spaces for a minute. There are 17,000 families in Metro Toronto alone still waiting for child care spaces. Do you know how many spaces you created in your budget? Not a single one. We all know that this business of the sleight of hand, this 40 million bucks you committed to child care, was in fact promised in last year's budget. Congratulations. But what that works out to is less than five hours of day care a week at minimum wage rates for a family that receives some of this money. What kind of day care do you think you can get when you're only going to be able to pay for five hours of day care a week at minimum wage rates?

Hon Mr Harris: The Minister of Community and Social Services is not here today. I know she could articulate a far longer list than I, but let me say this: In the area of child care this government is now spending 1,000 times more than the Liberal government in New Brunswick, this government is now spending on a per

capita basis double Quebec, three times what is being spent by the NDP —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I might add that all those figures are not on a per dollar base — we spend far more in dollars — but those are the figures on a comparative per child basis. Three times what the NDP spends in Saskatchewan per child we spend on child care here in Ontario.

In addition to that, yesterday in the budget that you're referring to, these programs that help 70,000 children not only remain intact but the minister announced a new program that maybe doesn't do as much as you want but it will help now I think upwards of 125,000 children, more than double those being assisted today, and begin to provide some help. Is it enough? We'd love to do more, but it is more than you ever did, it is more than the NDP ever did.

1400

Mr McGuinty: Not one day care space created by the Harris government. That may very well prove to be your legacy, not one I would be proud of.

I want to talk about something else. On top of existing cuts, you are taking another \$300 million from our kids' education. Your budget does nothing for the 30,000 Ontario children who were deprived of junior kindergarten last year. I am convinced that you don't understand the importance of junior kindergarten to Ontario. That is when the minds are most plastic, most impressionable, that's when we can make a positive, lasting impression.

We need more education as we prepare for the 21st century, not less. This year, 30,000 more Ontario kids will be deprived of junior kindergarten. We're supposed to be giving them a leg up on the rest of the world. You're holding them back. You've done nothing to lessen the pain of kids who are subject to abuse, you've done nothing for children who are waiting for child care spaces and you're hurting their chances in a workforce later on because of a lack of junior kindergarten.

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier.

Mr McGuinty: — kids don't count.

The Speaker: Leader of the official opposition, thank you very much.

Hon Mr Harris: I just want to remind the leader of the Liberal Party, who talks about child care spaces, that we have a surplus of empty child care spaces in Toronto, in this province today. What we have had, though, is municipalities unwilling to utilize and fund their 20% of those spaces. What we have done is found a way now to maintain those spaces, enhance the funding and assistance to utilize those spaces and, in addition to all that, provide help for an additional 120,000 children and their families over and above and beyond that.

Now you mention junior kindergarten. We are offering to fund our share of junior kindergarten for every child in the province. However, there are some parts of the province — perhaps it's geographic distance, perhaps it's for two and a half hours a day, it's two hours on the bus — which have said, "We don't think it makes sense for that." So we have found new ways to help young children at risk, \$50 million of programs.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Finance: Yesterday you tried to put a nice spin on your destructive cuts to Ontario's health care system. You put \$450 million into the health care budget and you tried to pass it off as somehow improving patient care. But when you look at the numbers and you look at what it's there for, it's there to pay severance costs for laying off nurses and it's there to pay for some of the construction costs involved in closing over 20 hospitals.

Will you admit now that the \$450 million that you show as additional in the health care budget doesn't add a cent to patient care? All it is is one-time dollars, one-time money to get rid of nurses and health care workers who have been laid off and to cover up some of the destruction that's left behind by closing over 20 hospitals. Will you admit that?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Minister of Health is more than capable of answering this question.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member has it wrong. The fact of the matter is that 450 million new dollars this year, 850 million new dollars next year to the health care budget will help with retraining of those who need retraining during the restructuring process. But it will also be available there when the commission requires new programs, like the \$10 million they've asked for to set up the institute for women's health, of which the finance minister announced \$6 million of yesterday and which annualizes next year to \$10 million; or the \$5 million for the AIDS network, which annualizes to \$10 million, to improve services and better coordination for people with HIV and AIDS in this province; or the \$2.3 million announced for hips and knees to bring 1,000 more surgeries on line so we can pare down our waiting list. Those recommendations and any other recommendations that come forward through voluntary restructurings or the Health Services Restructuring Commission will add new services for patients. So it's not just for severances. It's for new services, to fill gaps in services we have now —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: You've been caught out. Anyone who looks at your health care numbers and then compares them to three or four years ago can show that health care spending per person in Ontario is going down. Health care spending by your government, per capita, is going down.

What you've discovered is that closing all those hospitals means that some capital construction will be required to leave communities like Sudbury or Thunder Bay or London with one or perhaps two half-decent health care facilities. You've discovered there are a lot of construction costs and you've discovered that when you put 5,000 nurses and health care workers out the door, that's a lot of severance pay.

In fact, there's no good news in yesterday's budget for Sudbury or Thunder Bay or London or Women's College Hospital or Doctors Hospital or Wellesley Hospital or Montfort. There's no good news there for them at all. This is all about covering up and repairing the damage you've

already done. Why don't you admit it? This is all about laying off nurses and hospital —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member isn't listening very carefully to the president of the Ontario Hospital Association and to the health care experts out there or to his colleagues in other provinces of the New Democratic Party who have restructured their health care systems and today in British Columbia can point to more surgeries and more patient services in modern hospitals with the newest technologies.

We can be very proud in Ontario that we are second to none today and we are on the road to an even better health care system to prepare the system for an aging and growing population. Ontario has some unique needs in terms of the growth of our population that other parts of the country don't have because people want to live in Ontario. One of the main reasons they want to live in Ontario is because of our excellent world-class health care system, which is getting even better with the new money that the finance minister has announced.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, you can spin this and do accounting tricks all you like, but the reality is that in the last two years you cut \$800 million from hospital budgets and you forced those hospitals to make those economies before you put in any of these dollars that are to aid in restructuring.

There have been real cuts to patient care. Day after day in this place you hear examples of that, and day after day you stand up and deny that the reality faced by patients and their families in Ontario is true. Your credibility is going down the tubes. Basically what you've done now, having cut \$800 million out of hospitals, made them lay off nurses and scramble to try and provide services, is to say, "Now that you've done all that and you've absorbed all that in your budgets, we're going to give you the dollars you needed in the first place."

Minister, you don't have a plan. You haven't told us what's happening with long-term care. You haven't guaranteed that community care is going to be covered under OHIP. You can't —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for London Centre. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: All I can say is I'm really glad we don't follow the advice of the opposition parties as a government, because what you wanted was every penny put back in on a community-by-community basis. We've not seen \$800 million in savings from hospitals to date. We've seen closer to \$400 million. We have announced \$950 million in new programs back into some of those very same hospitals. We're taking from Peter to pay Peter. The commission has found \$1.1 billion in savings in the system that they say and the experts say and the OHA say will not affect patient care. We're putting all that money plus about \$700 million net more over the next couple of years to ensure that there are more services for patients.

Whatever way you slice the numbers, we've put about two and a half times more into health care than we've seen in savings, and the savings come from excessive administration. You've seen the salaries and the number of presidents and vice-presidents we have in these hospi-

tals. You've seen the empty buildings that are 86 years old, like Women's College, which is going to get a new building. These are —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question, third party.

1410

JOB CREATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier. Two years ago, your Common Sense Revolution promised jobs. In fact, you went around the province saying that your scheme of tax cuts would lead to 725,000 new jobs, and you were quite unequivocal about it, you were quite blunt about it: 725,000 new jobs.

In yesterday's budget you didn't talk about new jobs, you talked about potential, you talked about opportunity. It looks as if your promise has become weasel words. Maybe it was the fact that in August 1995 Ontario lost 13,000 jobs, or perhaps it was April 1996 when the economy dropped 12,000 jobs, or perhaps August 1996 when we lost 39,000 jobs. Premier, can you tell us what has happened to your promise of 725,000 jobs? Can you tell us what has happened to that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I guess you could play with one-month figures. I could come back and tell you that 45,000 were created in March alone. I could extrapolate that into a couple of million jobs. I don't think that's fair. That was just one month, and then there are other months where it's not as strong, and we all agree with that.

In spite of the fact that the biggest job-killing payroll taxes have come from the federal government, Ontario has cut through the punishing taxes that have come from the federal government, and in less than two years, according to StatsCan figures, we have now created about 150,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario.

We said that our target over a five-year period is 725,000 jobs. So far, in less than two years, we have 150,000 at the front end, the difficult end. We contrast that with your five-year legacy of minus 10,000.

Mr Hampton: Now we get into it. It's true we had to deal with the legacy of Brian Mulroney.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Government members, come to order. Opposition, come to order.

Mr Hampton: The government I was a part of had to deal with the legacy of Brian Mulroney, the highest interest rates ever, the highest deficits ever and a free trade deal that caused us to lose about 400,000 jobs in two years. The fact is, Premier, those jobs were gained back by 1995. But your record is this: There are 16,000 more people unemployed in Ontario today than there were when you formed the government. There are 100,000 more young people unemployed today. Your trend numbers are not good at all. In fact, the reality gap is growing. That is what you said there would be; this is what's actually happening.

Don't try to blame the federal government. Your cuts have had more to do with job loss than anything else. The question is: What are you going to do about all those people who are being left behind, all those people who

aren't getting jobs? That's your responsibility. What are you going to do?

Hon Mr Harris: We had a five-year period, roughly, when the NDP was in power, and they hiked taxes, they brought in labour legislation that was unbalanced, they intervened and got in front of and were very, very negative on business. The net result of the five-year legacy was 10,000 fewer jobs.

What we decided to do was the opposite of what you did: Instead of hiking taxes, we're cutting taxes; instead of more regulation, we're reducing regulation. What has happened as a result of that? So far, even in the initial stages, instead of 10,000 lost over five years, we have 150,000 created in less than two years.

Are we buying jobs? Are we artificially saying, "Here's a bunch of money," and there are jobs? No. We are flat out admitting that government itself cannot create jobs. So what we are doing is creating the climate where the private sector can create jobs. This province is now leading Canada and is in fact projected to lead all G-7 countries over the next three years.

Interjections.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Where are the jobs?

The Speaker: I would remind the members for Welland-Thorold and Fort York that you're out of order. Please restrain yourselves. Final supplementary, member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Premier, the range on jobs that you give the people of Ontario is somewhat meaningless. Look at the facts. What we have is economic growth without corresponding job growth. The hard reality is that 515,000 Ontarians are out of work. Some who are working — many — have to get a second and third job to bring home a sustainable income.

All eyes were on you and your minister yesterday. They look at this document. They want a job. They want a chance to be like you, a chance to hope. There is nothing in this document that gives them any chance to look to the future with confidence. What is needed is a serious program with a focus on full-time, well-paid jobs. What do you have to say? When are you going to get serious?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me thank the finance critic for the NDP for that question, and really for getting down to the heart of what do we plan to do in the future. I think even he would acknowledge our record is — well, 150,000 to minus 10,000 — better than his party's.

Let me say, if you look at this Minister of Finance and the credibility he has built up with the private sector job creators, then I think you would agree with me that the government can't afford to hire any more. Even your government was downsizing the bloated size of government you inherited from the Liberals. I think you would agree with me that we have to look at the private sector. The stimulus in this budget — a \$3-billion, 10-year program into research and development, where two out of three jobs have been created now in the economy; the new capital taxes on banks, which can surely afford to pay a little bit more tax, at the same time an incentive for getting dollars into small business —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with property tax and the impact of the budget on property tax. We found yesterday in the budget that the government has decided to eliminate the municipal support program. That's \$666 million of support from the province to municipalities. That is gone now, so that's going to have to be added on to the property tax. When you combine last week's announcement with that, we see you're adding \$666 million on to municipalities.

On January 17 the Harris government said, "Ontario should expect local councils to reduce property taxes by 10%." That's what the government said on January 17. Is the government still saying after yesterday's budget that property taxes in the province should come down by 10%?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, with respect to the municipal support grant, this government had the courage to do exactly what municipalities all across this province asked us to do. We accepted their proposal. We accepted virtually every single line in their proposal, about 98% of what they asked us to do. We have responded to what they wanted and we responded in a very positive fashion.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): That's nonsense, absolute nonsense.

Hon Mr Eves: That is not absolute nonsense, I say to the member from Kingston. I happened to be sitting in the room with 16 municipal representatives when they agreed to the deal and I can tell you that every single person in that room very enthusiastically supported the agreement. It's the agreement they asked for.

Mr Phillips: The minister may have been quite busy and tired or something. You didn't answer the question. You promised that you would see property taxes reduced by 10%. That was the question, now that you perhaps can listen more clearly. We now find that the province will set one third of the property tax mill rate. The province, for the first time in its history, now is setting one third of the property tax mill rate. It's a very unusual incursion on property tax. You've promised a 10% reduction. My question is this: Will we see the one third of the property tax mill rate that you set reduced by 10% by the year 2000?

1420

Hon Mr Eves: To the honourable member, we are going to do some things, obviously, that have not been done to protect property taxpayers in this province for a long time. During the decade that you two were in power, by the way, student enrolment went up 16%, education costs went up 82%, mill rates went up 80%, the actual revenue paid in property tax for education went up 120% and both of you sat there and watched it happen and did absolutely nothing to protect the property taxpayer.

What we are going to do is freeze the education portion of the residential mill rate. We are providing all kinds of opportunity for municipalities across this province by the year 2000 to reduce property taxes in this province. If they can find a 3% efficiency in the \$25 billion a year that municipalities spend, they indeed will be able to pass those savings on to the taxpayers of Ontario.

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the finance minister as well. In last year's budget you said you were spending an unprecedented, historic \$600 million on child care, and you didn't. On Monday you told Raj Ahluwalia from CBC Radio that broken promise was your biggest disappointment. Yesterday you told Suhana Meharchand from CBC TV, when she questioned you about the broken promise that, you've spent it now. But you haven't. You allocated it to a 1997 child tax credit.

People will file their 1997 taxes in 1998. That money will come out of the 1998 fiscal budget for the government. So you've taken last year's promise and announced this year that you're going to spend it next year. This year that \$40 million should have grown to \$80 million by your budget plan from last year. Will you tell us, is \$80 million in new money going to be spent on child care this year, or has that been put off to 1998 as well?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I know the member for Beaches-Woodbine has a very great difficulty, as do most members of her party, accepting the concept of PSAAB accounting; that is, you account for the money in the year in which you make the decision that it's spent. I know you kept two sets of books. I know that your Treasurer said capital debt isn't debt, that you never have to pay —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Eves: These are accepted accounting principles used by every government in Canada except this one — until we came into office. The Ontario Financial Review Commission made 45 recommendations to this government and we implemented every single one of them shortly after assuming office.

Your Treasurer said: "Capital debt isn't debt. You don't have to count that as money you owe." I'm sure everybody out there with a mortgage on their house will be happy to know they never have to make a mortgage payment. That was the Floyd Laughren system of accounting.

How did you do? You left the province and our children with a legacy of debt, \$100 billion, interest on that debt of \$9 billion a year, more than you spent on education, more than you spend on every hospital in the province of Ontario. That was your legacy. Those were your priorities.

The very direct answer to the question is no, we did not spend that \$40 million last year. We are accounting for it this year. We are giving a \$40-million tax credit. We happen to be in —

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Next year, maybe.

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury East, please come to order. Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: I always know that when the finance minister turns red and starts yelling he's on shaky ground with respect to the facts he's putting forward, and when he makes unwarranted attacks on the member for Nickel Belt I know he's on even shakier ground.

Most homeowners and mortgage payers and people who put food on the table know when they decide to go out and buy groceries that they've got to pay for them at that

point in time. For you to say that last year's announcement, which you're not going to spend until next year, still holds really makes people wonder about how much you're actually giving to provide child care spaces for children.

My question to you was about last year's announcement for the additional \$40 million for this year. That amount was supposed to grow to \$80 million this year. What are you doing with that money? Is that also being put off to be spent in 1998?

Hon Mr Eves: Not only have we made a commitment and introduced a brand-new child tax credit — I know this will come as a great shock to you and those in your party — there are other methods of child care in the province of Ontario that hard-working, honest, modest-income Ontarians who aren't in a fully government-subsidized day care space pay for. I know that's very difficult for you and your party to comprehend. Your solution to everything is, if it doesn't come out of the government coffers, it doesn't count.

We've also provided in the budget for another \$100 million in a further enhancement of a child care tax credit when we implement the national child care program that the federal government is giving us the room to operate in. You want to talk about money to put food on the table. In our Ontario tax reduction in this year's budget, 20,000 additional Ontario families will now not pay any Ontario income tax whatsoever.

1430

ENDOWMENT FUND

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I know all the good news in yesterday's budget is hard for the opposition to take.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do you know what I need to know? I need to know who your question is to.

Mr Newman: The Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. In yesterday's budget the Minister of Finance spoke about creating an endowment fund for the families of police, fire and other public safety officers killed in the line of duty. I agree wholeheartedly with this idea and want to ask you what you have in mind for this endowment. What are the details?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Between 1979 and 1997, 64 police officers and firefighters were killed in the line of duty, leaving behind about 150 spouses and children. That's a tragic statistic made worse by the fact, with respect to police officers, that their killers can receive a free education while in prison at the expense of taxpayers of this country. The children and spouses left behind have to struggle, in many cases, with very modest incomes. The Treasurer announced yesterday a \$5-million fund. I want to thank my colleagues in government for correcting a very serious injustice and demonstrating our commitment to front-line public safety officers in this province.

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to hear the Solicitor General's answer, as I'm sure are many members of the police and firefighting communities as well as the public. I want to follow up with the same minister by asking

whether this endowment fund will apply to cases in the past. In other words, will this fund be retroactive?

Hon Mr Runciman: Yes, it's my intention to have this fund be retroactive for children who have already lost a parent in the line of duty. The people of Ontario owe a debt of honour to the families of the fallen and this government is discharging that debt.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. I'm not sure that many people would be aware that this is Education Week in Ontario. It is, of course, an absolute coincidence that the government would be releasing its budget during Education Week, because I'm sure not even this government would deliberately choose to celebrate Education Week by confirming that they had made a further \$300-million cut to education. The government tried to hide that figure a little bit in its budget and chose instead to emphasize the fact that they were finding some money for capital construction.

The problem is that those new schools the minister has decided he should build will not have the teachers they need because the cuts to the grants are going to mean larger class sizes and more teacher layoffs. This government has now cut \$533 million from the grants that go to support our elementary and secondary school students. I ask this minister, how does cutting \$533 million, more than half a billion dollars to date, make education better?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I think we have much to be proud of this week, in Education Week, in making the announcements we made in the budget yesterday. I know a lot of the students who will be participating in some of the programs this summer that have been made available because of the announcement yesterday will be very pleased. I know a lot of the students who will be in a classroom, not a portable, over the course of the next year will be very pleased with the announcement this government's made.

I know a lot of the students and a lot of the teachers in those classrooms across the province will be very pleased that this government's been able to announce that there will be stable funding for programs and for students in the classrooms in the 1997-98 school year. We've made that announcement to make sure that the services and the education our students require will be there for them during this period of transition, a period of transition designed to get our tax dollars, our funding to the classroom to benefit students and teachers. That's the whole purpose of the reforms we've taken on. We're very proud of those and we're going forward with them.

Mrs McLeod: If this minister's proud, he's either ignoring what's happening to real students in real schools or he simply doesn't care, because we're already starting to see what is happening to students in classrooms as a result of this new round of \$300 million more in cuts. Boards like the Peterborough board: They don't know how they're going to handle the \$5.3-million cut they've got and still keep junior kindergarten, which they hung on to last year. Your own MPP Gary Stewart has already told you how worried he is about that one. The London Board of Education, looking at a \$13-million loss in grants, is

now cutting some 132 jobs and at least 100 of those are teaching jobs — 100 fewer teachers even though there are 489 more students in the London Board of Education this year. The Victoria county board doesn't know where they're going to go because they have already cut junior kindergarten and 100 employees last year. The Ottawa board is now talking about laying off 400 teachers.

A recent survey showed so clearly that people want to protect education that at least 80% would slow down the deficit reduction to maintain spending. How many teachers will be laid off, how many programs will be lost and how large will class sizes be because you refuse to slow down your cuts?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The member opposite has demonstrated an uncanny ability to do recycling. Yes, almost two years ago I announced some savings targets that were very modest compared with the savings that board associations themselves told us they could make. Yes, we introduced legislation to help them reduce the cost of administration and the cost of bureaucracy within their systems. Yes, we did introduce that.

Last December 20, I was able to tell school boards that there'd be no new savings this year and there are not. Most boards across this province have been able to find those savings last year and have absolutely no problems in terms of delivering programs this year. Not only that, they'll have stable funding for 1997 and 1998 as well.

The member opposite is right in one regard. The general legislative grant program, the way we funded education through your government, and through their government, is wrong, it's bad and it leads to second-class students in this province. We are changing that to give every student in the province the opportunity for a first-class education and I am proud of that.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question to the Premier. In the Common Sense Revolution and during the election campaign, you promised your government would not introduce any new user fees. Yesterday in the budget you broke that promise. You are now going to charge northern drivers a new fee of \$37 for registration of their vehicles. You are now going to charge motorcycle owners in northern Ontario a new fee of \$21 to register their vehicles. You're going to increase the registration fee for commercial vehicles an additional \$2. Owning and operating a vehicle in northern Ontario is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Can you tell me why you are charging northern drivers these new user fees?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Northern Development could answer that.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question. This is an issue about fairness. We recognize that gasoline taxes are higher in northern Ontario and that's why they will only pay one half of what southern Ontario residents will pay. But the real question northerners have been asking is for an improvement to their road system. This budget brings about \$200 million in new dollars over the next five years to spend more money than has ever been spent in the history of the province in

northern Ontario because of the abysmal shape these roads were left in after 10 years of neglect.

Ms Martel: Northerners already pay for road improvements in northern Ontario. We pay at the pump, Minister, in case you've forgotten that. We consistently pay more for gasoline than anyone anywhere else in Ontario, and that's why our government did away with the vehicle registration fee, to recognize that reality. Your government's going to take in \$1.9 billion in new revenue from your gas tax this year. Some of that money should be going back into northern Ontario to improve northern highways. Instead, you're going to punish northerners by making them pay more at the pump and now making them pay these new user fees. Why are you, as Minister of Northern Development, punishing northern drivers in this way?

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the member of the third party, that's nonsense. What we're doing is reinvesting in northern Ontario road structures. I have talked to hundreds of people who reside in northern Ontario who are legitimately concerned about the shape their roads are in. They're worried about the safety for themselves and the safety for their children. They recognize that road travel in northern Ontario is a necessity, that it's not a luxury, that you have to be able to travel on safe roads.

This increase recognizes the fairness. It's half of what we pay in southern Ontario, and there's more: There is \$40 million added to a base budget to improve road conditions in northern Ontario. That's \$200 million on top of a base budget.

Last year we spent more money on road construction than at any time in the history of the province. In each of the next five years we'll be spending money on road construction to build that infrastructure up, and if it's done properly, those roads will last for 15 years. It's a shame the maintenance wasn't kept up on those roads, and this government has had to reinvest \$200 million, far in excess of any fee that's going for licences.

Northerners have told us that as long as the money went directly back into road improvements —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

1440

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): My question is to the Minister of Labour and it concerns the Ontario-Quebec construction labour mobility agreement. I was surprised yesterday at the suggestion that this government was somehow less than anxious to finalize the important work of putting together a detailed interpretation guide for the Ontario-Quebec labour mobility agreement.

In my riding of Nepean in eastern Ontario and throughout the region construction mobility has been a major issue for many, many years. For years now people have been fighting for a level playing field between Ontario and Quebec, workers and contractors alike.

Some in the province, seeing the proceedings of this place yesterday, might have been left with the impression that all that was required was the translation of a simple two-page pamphlet. Could the minister outline to this House the full complexity of the guide and tell us what

specific efforts are being taken by her ministry to complete it before the important construction season?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I'm glad the member for Nepean has been very involved in reaching a resolution. I also appreciate the fact that he recognizes the complexity of the task that is ahead of us.

This agreement is unique in the Canadian federation. In fact, our agreement with Quebec is the only bilateral labour mobility agreement in all of Canada, and there is nothing like this 170-page guide anywhere else. Members of this House need to know that this guide was drafted in both languages, and it involved five ministries in Ontario and 12 ministries in Quebec as well as additional agencies. You might also be interested to know that this guide covers 28 tradesperson categories and 40 construction industry occupations. It has been a very complex task, but I'm proud to say —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Baird: We all welcomed the landmark agreement signed last year between Ontario and Quebec, the two provinces, seeking to establish a level playing field for workers and contractors alike. This is something for which people in my part of the province have been fighting for decades. What assurances can I give to my constituents in Nepean that this agreement will be monitored to make sure that it's fully respected and to make sure that our construction workers and contractors get access to work in the province of Quebec?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's important to recognize that this government was the first one to bring together the two sides and reach an agreement that guaranteed equal access for the Ontario construction worker in the province of Quebec.

I can assure you that the senior members of my staff at the Ministry of Labour are going to continue to monitor the agreement. There is also now a single point of entry with the Ottawa office of the Ministry of Education and Training. I can assure you as well that the bilateral monitoring body is going to continue to focus on this. Simply, I want to indicate to you, the agreement has been there. It is working. The guide that will be released next week is simply a tool to the interpretation.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday Mike Harris put this budget over on Ontarians as though it were good medicine for Ontarians. Minister, I'd like to ask you about medicine and health care in Windsor and Essex county. As you well know, and so does the Premier, we've had a terrible problem in the Windsor area because your government has not reinvested funding as you promised you would.

What we know is that in the budget you presented yesterday you showed more capital, more operating, reconfiguring money, \$850 million worth, \$600 million of which you did not spend but you announced. Our area in Essex county is looking for \$170 million in reconfiguration money. You are well aware that this is exactly what we need. Minister, where is our money coming from and when?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): We've set aside hundreds of millions of new dollars in anticipation of the health services restructuring reports in areas like Windsor-Essex. As you know, the commission has indicated it's going to your area. If it's anything like the interim report from London, here's what the commission said in terms of new dollars for home care and new hospital beds and transitional beds that have to be put into London.

Of that new money, the hundreds of millions of dollars going into health care above the \$17.8-billion budget, the commission suggests, for example, we spend \$1.3 million of that in adding 40,000 more home nursing visits to the London area because there's a gap in services and we're going to need more services. They recommend \$883,000 to \$1.1 million for transitional or sub-acute-care beds, a new type of bed, in the province that will give greater comfort to patients so that they're not discharged from hospital so quickly.

When the commission is done with your area, there's a huge fund of money now to ensure that every reinvestment the commission says needs to be done to improve health care in Windsor-Essex will be done.

Mrs Papatello: Minister, what you need to understand is that in Windsor-Essex county we started reconfiguration three years ago. Your Conservative members from southwest Ontario are well aware, even through media reports, that what they hear in this House is absolutely true, and that is that you have not reinvested. You have never once come to Windsor with a cheque. You have come to Windsor to do your flamboyant announcements and accuse former ministers of not playing the game.

You have been most political of all, because you have come down with some kind of panacea of an announcement where we have needed reinvestment funding for years, and you are not giving it. Minister, stand today and tell me that you are guaranteeing in this year \$170 million for Essex county.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister, you must withdraw that comment.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Mr Speaker, I'll withdraw it. I think it's the one that I said was misleading?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Well, we'll find that out.

The Speaker: You know what? I'll ask you to withdraw that comment.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I withdraw it.

Hon Mr Wilson: I was just down in Windsor-Essex a few weeks ago to give 19 million new dollars for a new cancer centre, and the honourable member has the gall today to say that isn't reinvestment. That is reinvestment. I'm prepared to go to Windsor as soon as the commission —

Mrs Papatello: You didn't bring any money down there; that is not reinvestment.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I warn you to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, you're in the wrong seat and you're out of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: That's out of order too, Minister of Northern — that's out of order as well.

Hon Mr Wilson: Maybe the honourable member isn't thankful, because she complains every day in this House about something. The fact of the matter is that when I was at the cancer centre and I had a discussion with the staff, they were very, very, very grateful for the \$19 million for that brand-new cancer centre to bring enhanced cancer services to the people of Windsor-Essex.

The Speaker: Motions.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move —

Mrs Papatello: Dianne, did you —

The Speaker: Order. Thank you. We're at the motions stage.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The repartee is not reaching heights here; let's just bring it down.

1450

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that Mr Parker and Mrs Ross exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business; and that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 78.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Johnson moves — dispense? Dispense. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): "Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVOntario is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I present petitions forwarded to me by Ron Jesse, the WCB worker representative from UFCW Local 1227P in the Hamilton and Burlington area. The petition reads as

follows, and it's signed by 472 members of UFCW Local 1227P:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Progressive Conservative government of Ontario is proposing to amend the Workers' Compensation Act; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments include cutting maximum benefits from 90% to 85% of net average earnings; and

"Whereas the government is further proposing to outlaw workers' compensation benefits for chronic stress; and

"Whereas the direct payment by employers to employees for the first four to six weeks of disability essentially amounts to privatizing a huge portion of WCB, giving employers total control and benefiting private insurance companies; and

"Whereas the Occupational Disease Panel will be folded back into the WCB, therefore compromising their ability to do credible independent work on establishing the cause of occupational diseases; and

"Whereas employer assessments under the government's proposals will be cut by 5%, adding billions of dollars to the board's unfunded liability;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold full provincial public hearings on any proposed amendments to workers' compensation legislation to provide all the people of Ontario the opportunity for full disclosure of all proposed amendments and the ability and forum to ensure that all the facts and potential impacts are heard and addressed."

I add my name to theirs.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of Ontario."

It is signed by 625 constituents, not all in my riding, and I will sign it as an indication that it has to be done so to be presented.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition which is addressed to the honourable John Snobelen, Minister of Education and Training, and to the members of the Ontario Legislature. It's a very short petition, but it comes right to the point:

"We, the undersigned, believe that the education of our children will suffer because the education reforms introduced by the Minister of Education and Training do not reflect:

"(1) The democratic principles that are cherished by our society;

"(2) A true perception of what our 'classrooms' involve and a true assessment of their cost; and

"(3) A recognition of the special funding needs in Metro."

I'm pleased to sign it.

RESTRUCTURATION DES MUNICIPALITÉS

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : J'ai ici une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

«Attendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario se propose de changer entièrement la structure des relations entre la province et les municipalités sans avoir consulté la population de l'Ontario ; et

«Que cette restructuration propose de transférer aux municipalités le coût des services de transport et des services sociaux essentiels tels que l'aide sociale et les soins de longue durée à l'intention des personnes âgées et des personnes atteintes d'une maladie chronique ; et

«Enlève-aux conseils scolaires leur habilité à lever des impôts, éliminant tout pouvoir de contrôle réel sur les écoles et les programmes scolaires ; et

«Considérant que le gouvernement ne manifeste pas d'intérêt pour une consultation réelle du public, qu'il ne prend pas en compte les réactions du public et qu'il constitue ainsi une grave menace pour la démocratie ;

«Nous, les soussignés résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario, parce que nous nous soucions de la qualité de vie dans notre province et du bien-être de nos enfants, de nos voisins, de nos voisins et de nos communautés, déposons par la présente un vote de non-confiance contre le gouvernement de l'Ontario.»

Je soussigne cette pétition.

CHOICE IN HEALTH CARE

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I have a petition today from the constituents of my riding of Simcoe East.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"As taxpayers and consumers, we have the right to make and act upon our own choices with respect to medical and health therapies offered by all regulated health care professionals, particularly physicians, as long as we are not being harmed or at risk of appreciable harm."

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from Canadian Auto Workers in Windsor, Toronto and Hamilton, forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, their national president. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to theirs.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

I've affixed my signature to this petition.

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HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury and 11 hospitals in Toronto;

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into considering the closing of local hospitals;

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for years to come;

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that of most areas in the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in full agreement with it.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition signed by some 200 or 300 individuals, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a jail culture promoting violence, distrust and deceit for survival inhibits the offender from making the change from criminal values to responsible societal values which mark rehabilitation; and

"Whereas alternative treatment centres or different sentences (eg, community service) would reduce the overcrowded conditions in our jails; and

"Whereas our citizens want safer communities, which can only be achieved by changing people; longer sentences and larger jails with harsher conditions merely increase anti-social behaviour; and

"Whereas a more cost-effective approach to our extremely high levels of incarceration is to put our resources into high-quality child care, parenting education and recovery programs aiding troubled people;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned members of faith communities and concerned citizens, urge our government to set aside plans for the so-called superjails and to invest in the people, not buildings."

I've signed the petition.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The campaign to save TVOntario continues very strongly with a petition campaign coming from all across the province and I am pleased to read one more petition today.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I am proud to sign my name to that.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by members of the United Steelworkers of America, OPSEU and CUPE.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate, and especially the right to refuse" unsafe work; "and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario in keeping with the remarks of my leader earlier this afternoon.

"Whereas the early years represent the vital foundation for success in a child's life;

"Whereas all children deserve full access to high-quality early childhood education which best meets the needs of their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To reinstate capital funding to early childhood education;

"To mandate compulsory participation in junior kindergarten for all school boards;

"To ensure a fair and equitable wage for all early childhood teachers which reflects the value of the work they do;

"To ensure ratios are maintained at current levels so that the needs of individual children may be met; and

"To follow through with the allocation of \$200 million over five years as promised in the May 1996 budget."

I'm very happy to affix my signature to go with hundreds of residents of my riding who are very concerned about this issue.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

1997 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): For those who are just tuning in, this is the commencement of the debate on the budget that was introduced in this House yesterday.

I intend to take some time on behalf of my party to offer some comments, constructive by and large, on the budget. In particular, I intend to bring home to the members of the government that ultimately the reason we

have been sent here is to represent the interests of people. We're not here to advance the cause of government, the cause of business, the cause of labour, the cause of interests of any particular kind. We are here, at the end of the day, to represent people. It is my intention to show that people have been overlooked in the budget we had presented in this House yesterday and that this government is attacking the fiscal deficit at the risk of people and that in effect it's creating something I call a human deficit.

We have prepared a publication called *The Human Deficit: The Real Cost of the Mike Harris Budget*. In this document we outline in some detail how the budget is exacting a cost on the people of this province and the quality of life that we have come to enjoy.

At the outset, I want to make it clear where I come from when it comes to these kinds of things and offer some sense of my values, because I think it's important for Ontarians to gain that understanding. I was elected as leader of my party some six months ago and I think it's important for them to gain some better impression of who I am and what's important to me.

Before studying law I studied biology. I did that for four years. Maybe that's one of the reasons I often think of our electorate in terms of anatomy. There's the head, or the intellect; there's the heart, and that's compassion; there is the gut, and that's the visceral. I believe that our obligation as leaders is to avoid the gut.

Let me give you an example of a simplistic kind of pitch that would be geared to the gut. That would be if I was to stand up in this House and say: "You know, the real problem in Ontario today is all those people on welfare. We all know that they're sitting around at home watching TV and drinking beer and there's not a single one among the lot who has any genuine interest in advancing themselves and pulling themselves forward. What we really ought to do is, we've got to do something with those people. Or maybe more importantly, what we really ought to do is something to those people."

1510

That is a good example of a pitch targeting the gut in a game. I think our job as leaders, as holders of public office, but especially as Liberals, is to avoid the gut. Our job is to strike that balance between the head and the intellect and the heart and compassion — the head especially when it comes to fiscal responsibility, and compassion because we believe that everybody has got to move forward together. If anybody is left behind, then we cannot lay claim to calling ourselves a truly caring and compassionate society. That's where I come from. I think our job as Liberals is to avoid the gut, avoid those kinds of pitches or appeals which are designed to reflect our worst; rather to appeal to that sense of balance between the head — the intellect — and the heart — compassion — which is designed to bring out our best.

What are we to make of this budget? What are we to make of the budget introduced in the House yesterday by the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, a budget prepared, condoned and encouraged and nurtured by the Premier, Mike Harris? I think the budget has left Ontario people behind. I think this government has an unhealthy obsession with the deficit; I think this government has

adopted a dangerous policy of delivering to us a tax cut that we can't afford.

Let me be very clear about the tax cut, because that seems to be the topic du jour in the midst of this federal election. Some argue that a tax cut at this stage is good; others argue that it's not good. I want to make it perfectly clear that I'm in favour of a tax cut, but it's not the right time, and the issue is not whether we want a tax cut; the issue is whether in the grand scheme of things we can afford a tax cut. I think from both an economic perspective and the perspective of people, it's the wrong thing to do at this time.

If we were sitting around a corporate boardroom table today and the accountant for the corporation made a presentation to us and said that we were bleeding profusely, the company was in the red, we were losing money, but somebody else, one of the directors, came forward and said, "I've got a proposal. I want us, notwithstanding that bad news, to declare a dividend to benefit shareholders," or somebody else came forward and said, "I've heard the bad news and I understand we're losing money, but I still want to give a bonus to all our employees," I think the rest of us would say: "Did you not hear what the numbers person just told us? We'd like to be able to do those kinds of things, but we simply can't afford it."

The other thing we ought to keep in mind is that we're caught up here, swinging from one end of the spectrum to the other. We had a number of years of NDP government, and that government felt it could spend its way out of our problems. This government feels it can cut its way out of our problems. Each is just as bad as the other. Each lacks a sense of balance, a sense of responsibility. Each lacks that kind of spirit that is informed by an understanding that you've got to make that appeal to the heart and the intellect at the same time: fiscal responsibility and compassion.

Reckless cutting is just as dangerous as reckless spending. That's what this government is into. They're into reckless cutting. I like to use the example of the mortgage my wife and I have on our home. It's amortized over a 25-year period. If my wife and I really struggled, we could probably pay the damn thing off in 10 or 15 years, but if we did that, it would come at the expense of some of the things we feel are important for our four children to have.

That analogy has some limitations, but it's not unlike the situation our province finds itself in. It has taken a number of years to get into this financial difficulty. I for one don't feel it's worthwhile spending a lot of time trying to lay blame on previous generations of governments or politicians or Ontarians, as if somehow that would make us feel better. The fact of the matter is that we find ourselves in financial difficulty, and the issue is, how do we get out?

I know one thing: It has taken us some time to get in, and we ought to take some time to get out. I think the government ought to be putting before us a clear plan which shows that we are proceeding surely, inexorably towards the elimination of the deficit.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): That's what we're doing.

Mr McGuinty: The member says, "That's what we're doing," but the problem is that plan is driven by,

informed by this obsession with giving us all a tax cut we can't afford. If we didn't have to find another \$5.5 billion, if we didn't have to borrow, in effect, another \$5.5 billion to deliver a tax cut to Ontarians, then we wouldn't have to be cutting so deeply and in some of the programs that we understand are so important to our future, things like health care and education.

I want to talk to you a moment about some of the information contained in our book here. We talk in here about a number of the deficits which this government fails to recognize. They act as if they're not really there. We talk about our health care deficit that has been created as of a result this government's policies; we talk about our learning deficit; we talk about our children's deficit; we talk about our employment deficit; we talk about the real cost of the Harris tax cuts; and we talk about something that's very interesting, I believe, called the "kept promises deficit." I want to touch on each of those areas because I think they are all of fundamental importance to any intelligent debate of this budget.

I want to talk at the top about our health care deficit. I had a great job after grade 13; I took a year off and I worked at the National Defence Medical Centre in Ottawa. I got a job there as an orderly, and my job was to provide basic nursing care to Second World War vets, some of whom had lost limbs during the course of the war, some of whom were comatose in fact. My job was very simple: to feed these men, shave these men, brush their teeth, give them baths, change their diapers, give them back rubs, turn them from side to side, because as you may recognize, if somebody is confined to bed and can't turn himself, he develops bedsores, so you've got to turn him. I learned how to treat bedsores. What that experience taught me, what it impressed upon me was a fundamental respect for human dignity.

It occurs to me that perhaps the single greatest hallmark of a truly caring and compassionate society is that society's continuing willingness and ability to care for its sick on the basis of one single, solitary criterion: because you're sick. Mike Harris is cutting \$1.3 billion from Ontario hospital budgets. Mike Harris is interfering with our ability as a society to deliver care in a compassionate way to Ontario's sick.

I have had the unfortunate obligation to raise in this House stories of patients who are already experiencing the effects of Mike Harris's hospital cuts, of people who are at risk in a very real sense inside Ontario hospitals in 1997 because of policies enacted by this government. I would argue that this is unheard of for a government, that it can be legitimately accused and found guilty of causing harm to Ontario patients inside our hospitals, institutions to which we are supposed to go to receive care.

1520

In addition to that, all of us will recall that during the course of the provincial campaign leading into the last election there was a televised debate, and during the course of that debate questions were raised regarding the future of hospitals in Ontario. I think it's important for Ontarians to recognize that during that debate Robert Fisher from Global TV asked the following question: "Can you guarantee us tonight that your pledge to protect health care will mean that you will not close hospitals?"

That was the question and it was directed to Michael Harris, then leader of the third party in Ontario. This is what he said: "Certainly. I can guarantee you, Robert, that it is not my plan to close hospitals." To date, we find 22 Ontario hospitals on the chopping block, this owing to the man who said: "Certainly. I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals." What are Ontarians to make of this?

We've heard so much during the course of the last 24 hours about how the Premier is putting all kinds of money into health care. Finally our ship has arrived. It's come in. We can all relax. Patients who find themselves inside Ontario hospitals today ought to breathe a tremendous sight of relief because the Premier is going to look after them. This from the man who told us, "It is not my plan to close hospitals."

It is true that this budget contains some more money for health care in Ontario and for hospitals, but I properly label that money wreckers' fees, because what it's for is to pay off through severance packages the nurses who are going to be fired and it's to close hospitals. It's to restructure. Not one cent of it, not a single penny, is going to go to improve the quality of health care that is delivered in Ontario hospitals today.

The Premier and the Minister of Health are both fond of saying, "It's not bricks and mortar that care for people; it's people that care for people." In that regard, the Premier and the minister are absolutely correct, but what they fail to understand is that nurses are the people who care for people. When you cut \$1.3 billion out of Ontario hospital budgets, you're laying off 15,000 nurses. In addition to that, thus far we have laid off 12,300 health care workers who formerly worked in our hospitals. When you lay off that many health care workers, when you lay off 15,000 nurses, you cannot help but compromise the quality of care that is being delivered inside those hospitals.

I'm not making this up. There are stories I have had to raise both in this Legislature and outside that would break your heart. They have to do with the fact that people who find themselves inside hospitals today in Ontario aren't getting access to basic nursing care, the kind I referred to earlier on, the kind I was called upon to deliver as an orderly so many years ago at the National Defence Medical Centre in Ottawa.

I raised in this Legislature some months ago now the story of Mr Kaihla, a patient who found himself inside a hospital in Sault Ste Marie. His son had written an article in the newspaper — that's why I don't mind talking about this — and he talked about the experiences his father suffered inside the hospital. He talked about his frustration, and this is a modern-day reality. He found himself here in Toronto, a journalist, and his dad was in Sault Ste Marie, the home town.

We have the case of a single child. We have the case of an elderly wife and mother living in Sault Ste Marie. The father was hospitalized at the end of his life. The mother, the wife, wasn't that well and she couldn't travel to and from the hospital on a regular basis. The son, who lived here in Toronto, had a reasonable expectation that even though he couldn't be there by his father's side and even though his mother couldn't be there to ensure that

the father was receiving proper treatment, he had developed this expectation that in our province, in Ontario, in 1997, if you're sick and you're hospitalized, we're going to look after you. What he found was that that was not the case.

This is what he wrote in the newspaper. When he did have the rare occasion to visit the hospital he said: "I was shocked by the general griminess of this hospital environment. My mother and I found soiled diapers left discarded on the floor by my father's bed and unwashed urinals left on the same side table that was used for the food tray and the medications. There were countless lapses in his basic care, like not getting fed when my mother nor I were there to do it."

The son had to return to Toronto, so he had a friend visit the father. The son wrote: "When my friend entered his room before lunch, it did not appear that much nursing had been conducted there yet. My father's IV stand was knocked over. He had not been shaved. His mouth was parched and his lips were cracked. The food tray arrived without any beverage. For the next two hours no nurse entered the room, nor did any staff come to feed him."

One final note from the son. He said: "Seventy-three days after his admission, my father died, his flesh raw and open from his being left too long in soiled diapers so many times. He had screamed in agony when being wiped during his last weekend."

Do you know what they told him at the hospital when he raised complaints about the lack of basic nursing care? They told him that he ought to retain a private duty nurse because they could no longer provide that kind of basic nursing care. That's not the kind of Ontario I want to live in.

If Ontarians understood what is developing in this province under the Mike Harris regime inside our hospitals alone — I'll soon touch on education — I think they would turn their heads away and say: "That is not for me. I am not comfortable with that. If you are sick in my province, if you are in physical need, we're going to look after you." Right now, we can't deliver that kind of care. That is not the fault of our hospitals, it is not the fault of our hospital administrators or our nurses. It's a lack of funding.

You know what? Some people are afraid to say this, but some of the quality of life we happen to enjoy here costs a bit of money. It's as simple as that. I make no apologies for that. The quality of care, the quality of life that we enjoy in this province is a function, to some degree at least, of what we spend. If we find ourselves in some financial difficulty, then yes, we've got to find efficiencies, we've got to find savings, but let's be careful. When we make cuts, let's make sure that we're not making those kinds of cuts we are feeling today in Ontario hospitals, cuts that are resulting in a lack of basic nursing care to people who find themselves in need inside those hospitals.

We've also raised in this Legislature the story of somebody else's father. I think it's important from time to time for all members in this House to recognize that we're always talking about people here. It's easy to get caught up in programs and policies, and we talk in terms

of billions of dollars. But fundamentally what governments do has an impact on people at a very basic level. 1530

I want to tell you another story, not about a patient but about somebody else's father. This man was 82 years of age and he arrived at the Peterborough Civic Hospital by ambulance on February 4 of this year at 9 o'clock in the morning. He had only been to the doctor twice in 59 years of marriage. He was a very healthy man. He found, when he arrived there, that there were no beds available, so his wife and his daughter waited with him in the emergency ward.

His daughter had to leave to go to work, so at about noon she leaves, gets in the car and drives to work. The mother was growing tired, and by 9 o'clock in the evening she figured she'd have to leave as well. She had made efforts to try to get him a bed during the course of the day. At 10 o'clock the following morning the daughter returned to the crowded emergency hallway to find her father was still there. He had not been placed in a room. When she approached her dad, she found that in fact he had died. Nobody in the hospital knew that this man on this bed in this hallway, underneath glaring lights, being bypassed by patients and hospital workers alike, had died.

So she runs over to the administration and she says, "How long has my father been lying here dead?" Can you imagine that? In 1997, in Ontario, you bring your father to the hospital, you leave him there with the reasonable expectation that he'll be cared for, that somebody at some point would examine him, determine what the problem was and do what they could to address it. You leave him there and you come back the next day and you yourself discover that in this sanctuary, this refuge, your father had died and nobody knew about it.

That's just another sad tale I wish I didn't have to relate to the members of this Legislature and to our television viewers. But I want them to understand that we've got a problem today in Ontario, and it's a very serious problem, in that when you cut \$1.3 billion from Ontario hospital budgets, there is a corresponding effect. There has been a significant reduction in the quality of care that's available at our hospitals, and that's directly related to the fact that this government is taking money out of our hospital budgets.

I want to talk to you about education in Ontario, the state we find it in today. But I want to tell you a little story first. I have the occasion now, as I do on a regular basis, to go out and give speeches. I had the opportunity to deliver a speech to a group of senior women in Ontario right here at the main library in downtown Toronto. The average age of my listener would have been, I think, somewhere near 67 or 68. I was impressed by the fact that the concerns they raised with me after I had finished speaking were twofold. One you would expect: They're very concerned about health care in Ontario, for the reasons I've just related.

But the next thing they talked about was education. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that these senior women understood, had an innate sense that of all the things we can do to ensure that Ontario can really embrace the 21st century, to ensure that we're going to make it, there is

nothing more important than to invest in our people by providing them with the best possible education.

I think most people in this province understand that. We are going to get by in the 21st century on brainpower. We've got to have the best-skilled, the most highly educated workforce on the planet right here. That ought to be the ideal we hold before us. That ought to be what informs our efforts. That ought to be what motivates this government.

I want you to think of this now: Last year, 44 out of 50 American states increased funding to their publicly funded universities. That's what they did. What did we do in Ontario? We cut funding to our universities by, I think, 16%. We took \$400 million out of post-secondary education in Ontario. We now have the distinction of ranking last in all of Canada when it comes to funding for our universities.

What is it that the Americans know that apparently this government doesn't understand? What is it that the other provinces know that this government doesn't know? They understand that if we're going to get ahead, if we're going to make it in a global economy, in a knowledge-based economy, it's going to be by ensuring that we equip our people with the best skills and the best education possible.

We cannot compete in some of the base kinds of industries because there is always going to be another jurisdiction that is going to pay a lesser minimum wage; there's always going to be another jurisdiction that is going to waive its environmental laws, assuming there are any. That is not our shtick, we have never been any good at it, but where we are very good is in knowledge and developing a knowledge-based economy.

We have this perverse situation today where with unemployment somewhere between 9% or 9.1% in our province, I have 3,000 jobs in our community that we can't fill. Think of that: 3,000 jobs today in Ontario that we can't fill. Those jobs are all in high tech. I don't think any of them start at less than \$45,000 a year. For every one of those jobs we fill, we create three or four spinoffs for people who know nothing about high tech.

What is this government doing to ensure we're filling those jobs? What is this government doing to ensure our universities are second to none, to ensure our post-secondary system of education is world-class, to ensure all Ontarians can look forward to the future with optimism? Nothing. They cut funding by 16%. They took \$400 million out of post-secondary education in Ontario last year. The government before, the NDP government, increased tuition fees by 42%. This government has increased them by 30%.

There comes a point in time when post-secondary education becomes something that's out of reach. I know I speak for everybody here when I say we want our young people to go on to post-secondary studies, but we're putting a fence up in front of them, we're putting a hurdle in front of them that too many of them can no longer overcome, because it's becoming too expensive.

Some people believe that increasing, to some extent, student assistance is the solution. But I can tell you that I've had the opportunity to review some studies that have come from other jurisdictions, and they show that not-

withstanding the amount of student assistance — and it's at a shameful level in Ontario today. But even if that were rectified, in the face of exceedingly high tuition fees, there are many, many students — and this is documented — who would say to themselves, "I am not comfortable graduating with that size of a debt load."

1540

My parents at home told me, "You pay as you go." We didn't get the roof until we could afford it; Mom and Dad didn't get the car until they could afford it. But we're telling students, "You've got to come out of school now with a debt to the tune of \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, if you're doing post-graduate work." Too many of our students are then going to say: "If that's the case, to heck with it. I am not going to pursue post-secondary studies. I am not comfortable with that notion of so much debt on my shoulders when I get out of school." I don't think this government understands that.

I've talked about post-secondary, but let me for a minute talk about the other end. The actions of this government have led to 25 school boards in Ontario to date cancelling junior kindergarten. That means that 30,000 young Ontarians have been deprived of junior kindergarten.

I know there is a fiction out there, some kind of myth. That fiction or myth says this: "It's just a fancy baby-sitting service. Junior kindergarten doesn't teach them a damned thing. The mothers ought to be at home; that's where they belong, and they ought to be looking after the kids." That fails to recognize modern reality. The fact of the matter is, the great majority of couples who are raising children in Ontario today are both out working, and they're not out there to pay for luxuries; they're out there working hard to pay the rent or pay the mortgage or make the car payments or pay for the diapers or pay for the baby food. That's why they're doing it. That is a modern-day reality.

Let's come back to junior kindergarten. All of the studies are in on this. Everybody who is an authority in this area understands that it benefits children from all socioeconomic groups. It helps us detect problems, if there are any, at an early stage and it helps us to begin to treat those problems at the earliest possible time.

We also know that the mind is most impressionable, it's most plastic, in the early years, and kids are like sponges: They'll take in that information. We get them ready to learn, we get them excited about learning, we top them up so they're all at the same level, and then when they get into kindergarten and the years beyond that, they are truly ready and prepared for learning. I think most people in Ontario today innately would understand that we need more education today, not less.

Some 23 boards in Ontario today as a result of this government's policies have made reductions to their special education programs. At some point in time you've got to apply a moral test to government. Some people might shrink from that word, say: "That's kind of old-fashioned. I'm not comfortable with that." What I mean by that is most people have an innate sense of what's right. When you apply the moral test to cutting back on special education, cutting back on education for those who have learning disabilities, I think most people would say, "That's not right."

There are certain groups in Ontario who don't lobby us, don't write us, don't know how to put together placards, don't mount bus convoys, don't demonstrate outside Queen's Park, and they don't even vote. I would include in that group the learning-disabled; I would include in that group children; I would include in that group our most senior Ontarians; I would include in that group people who are very ill. I think most people in Ontario understand that it would not be right for the rest of us to benefit at the expense of those people. So when I talk about a moral test, that's what I'm talking about. I think this government is failing the moral test when it comes to things like special education.

Coming back to something I said at the outset, how important it is for us to keep our eye on the ball in politics, I got into politics for people. Sometimes, given the forces that act on all of us, it's not easy to keep your eye on that ball, because you've got to get caught up in the policies and you've got to get caught up in the programs and you've got to look at statements of account and budgets. But really the reason we're all here is for people.

I want to tell you another story about somebody I encountered along the way as the MPP for Ottawa South. Mr Kerwon came to see me a few months back and he told me he'd had a problem and he wanted me to help him out with it. He wanted me to meet his son. I went to meet his son, Gordie. Gordie is 21 years of age, he's a big, strapping, handsome fellow, but he's not like the rest of us. He doesn't play football or soccer or baseball; he plays with his teddy bear. Gordie has the mind of a three-year-old.

His dad came to see me, and his mother. They spoke to me about the fact that he had been enrolled in an education program that came to an end when he was 21 years of age. Just to show you what it's like in the Kerwon home, the way it worked for Gordie's parents was they told me there had been a major cause for celebration some six months prior. You know what it was? The mom and the dad were at the dinner table and they heard the toilet flush. That was the cause for celebration. Gordie, 21 years of age, had gone to the bathroom on his own.

Those of us who have had the joy of raising kids know some of the milestones along the way. You begin to look forward to the day when your daughter can dress herself or your son can tie his shoes or the kids are finally out of diapers, those kinds of things.

The Kerwons have a 21-year-old son. That is their lot in life and they have not for one instant tried to shirk what they feel to be their proper responsibility. Gordie's never going to be out of diapers. They are prepared to assume responsibility for their son until the day he dies, but they felt they needed just a bit of a hand from the government. It seems to me that in the grand scheme of things they weren't asking for a hell of a lot.

Gordie had recently learned at school, at 21 years of age, to point to three diagrams. One of those diagrams meant, "I'm hungry"; the other diagram meant, "I'm tired and I want to go to bed"; and the other diagram meant, "I want to go to the bathroom." That was a major accomplishment for the Kerwons.

When he turned 21 years of age, there's a law in Ontario that says, "We're no longer going to pay for your education." So they had two options. They could come up with the money on their own — and it was a lot of money; I forget the exact amount, but certainly in excess of \$15,000 — or they could put him on a waiting list for group homes, and in our area there's a waiting list of some 300 people. In fact, they had another option too. One of them could stay at home with their son all day, every day. As Mrs Kerwon put it to me: "I dearly love my son but I couldn't stay home with him 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. I just couldn't do it."

1550

All the Kerwons wanted was the help of the government to keep their son in school, given the fact that he was still learning. It was only after I raised Gordie's plight in this Legislature that the Minister of Education said that he was going to look at it. In fact, he said that he was prepared to make the necessary change in that law. I haven't seen any sign of that yet, but on behalf of the Kerwons I remain very hopeful.

With this story and the others that I've told, the point I want to drive home is something our parents have been telling us for centuries: There's no free lunch. If you honestly think we can get a tax cut in Ontario today that's going to cost \$5.5 billion and there are no downsides, then you're dreaming in Technicolor. People are going to get hurt. I think most people in Ontario, if they understood the downsides, truly understood them, would say: "I'm not comfortable with that. That's not right."

You know the good news in Ontario? The good news is that we're still not comfortable with people sleeping on our streets. We're still not comfortable knowing that somebody's father could die in a hospital hallway and nobody on staff at the hospital would know about it. We're still not comfortable in Ontario, thank God, with kids turning to crime and drugs. We're still not comfortable with any of those things, and that's why I am convinced that when people take the time to understand the real consequences of this government's policies, they will turn their heads and say: "That is not for me. That is not my Ontario. I am not comfortable with that."

Over the past several weeks I have raised in this Legislature concerns about children in Ontario, and particularly about children who are the subject of abuse. Today in Ontario over two dozen kids, most of them under the age of three, will be beaten, kicked, punched, slapped, suffer cigarette burns, possibly be shaken very violently. Some of them will experience very severe injury. Some of them will cry as a result of this; others, and this is even worse, will say nothing. It seems to me that one of the obligations we have in this Legislature is to make sure we do all that we reasonably can for those children.

This spring and this summer in Ontario we will have eight inquests held into the deaths of infants and children who had had some connection with the children's aid society. These inquests have made it abundantly clear that the children's aid societies cannot keep up with the demand. They cannot meet their obligations because the workload is simply too great.

This morning's Ottawa Citizen had a story about an inquest being held into the death of a couple of children: Margaret, eight, and Wilson, 10 years of age, brother and sister. In May 1995 their father walked into his apartment where the kids were. He had his rifle with him and he very gently put the muzzle against their heads and gently squeezed the trigger.

The headline of this story is "CAS Logjam Could Lead to Another Tragedy: Social Workers Lack Time to Handle Heavy Caseload, Kasonde Inquest Told." I want to quote from the beginning of this article. It says:

"Social workers at the children's aid society are so overloaded with work that another tragedy like the murder of the Kasonde children could occur, an inquest heard yesterday.

"Jean-Jacques Tremblay, the last CAS social worker to deal with the Kasonde family, said that he and his colleagues were 'deluged' when he took the case in 1995. He added that he continues to have too little time to give proper attention to complex matters.

"With your caseload still being heavy, do you feel there is a real potential for harm?" a male juror asked him.

"There is no question of that," replied Mr Tremblay, who said child protection workers typically deal with 12 to 14 families at any given time."

In this case, as in most of the other cases, sadly and tragically the warning signs were there, and for a variety of reasons, but first and foremost because they don't have the time to keep up with the caseload, those warning signs weren't heeded. We didn't pay attention to them.

For example, it says here that Mr Tremblay had been asked earlier to look into a February 1995 report by a teacher that Margaret — that's the eight-year-old girl — was so afraid of her father and his gun that she would cry at school on the days he picked her up for visits.

I think everybody recognizes or ought to recognize that we have a serious problem. I would call it a crisis. I'm not sure I've ever called anything else in my seven years in this House a crisis. I don't use that word loosely; I use it very carefully and decidedly. We have a crisis when it comes to our inability to look out for the interests of children who find themselves in circumstances today in Ontario where they are the victims of abuse.

What has this government done in the face of that clear and unequivocal crisis, in the face of testimony at inquests being held into the murders of young Ontario children? You know what they're doing? They're cutting funding to children's aid societies by \$17 million. That has led to the layoff in Ontario today of 340 case workers in our province. It's cheap, it's chintzy, it's short-sighted and it reveals, I think goes to the heart of, what this government is all about.

Some people have commented on the discipline of this government. They know who theirs are and theirs know them. They know who voted for them, they will look out for those interests, they will make no efforts whatsoever to branch out, to moderate, to move to the centre of the road.

It's really unfortunate that this government doesn't pay more attention to the needs of children, those silent, quiet victims of the Common Sense Revolution. All the gov-

ernment had to do was restore, at minimum, the funding, the \$17 million it had stolen from children's aid societies in Ontario. Is that really in the grand scheme of things that big a deal?

I remain hopeful for our great province, because if you go and knock on doors in any riding in our province today and you tell them one of the results, one of the costs, of the tax cut is that we're cutting \$17 million out of children's aid societies and that we're laying off 340 case workers and that children who find themselves at risk today will not be cared for, if you present that contrast to them and ask: "Are you comfortable with that? Does that make you feel proud to be an Ontarian? Does that make you feel good?" I am very comfortable in saying that people will say: "I'm not comfortable with that. That's not my Ontario."

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Even from an economic perspective, if we have to reduce everything to an economic argument, from a purely economic perspective it makes sense to invest in our children. We have known for too long now that for every buck you spend up front, you save seven down the line.

I used to make a darned good living as a criminal lawyer, defending what we used to call in those days juvenile delinquents, now called young offenders, and the most pathetic and tragic aspect of my practice was to see how so much of that criminal behaviour was so eminently predictable, and we did nothing about it. We continue to do nothing about it. I know there are all kinds of cheap political capital to be gained by saying, "We're going to slap those kids into those institutions" — what do we call those things?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Boot camps.

Mr McGuinty: They're called boot camps. It's just not part of my vocabulary. "We're going to slap those kids so damned hard they won't know what the heck hit them."

It's too late. I can tell you it is far too late for us to focus our efforts on boot camps. It starts up front. You've got to invest up front, and that starts with ensuring that when you're growing up you're not beaten up by your mom or your dad or mom's boyfriend; it starts by ensuring there's quality day care available; it starts by ensuring that junior kindergarten is there for you, and all the way along the line. If you really want to get criminals where it hurts, you get them at the beginning. You make sure it's tough for them to develop in that way.

One of the things I recall when I was travelling through the province is I met a farmer, a wise man, and we were talking about crime prevention. He said: "You know, son, I want you to think of your lawn in the spring. You know and I know that in a few months' time weeds are going to make their appearance. There are a couple of things you can do, son," as he put it to me. "You can wait for those weeds to appear and pick them out one by one, or you can immediately begin to lay down those kinds of conditions that make it tough for the weeds to make an appearance in the first place."

I didn't know it at the time but he was talking about crime prevention. The same thing applies. We can wait for our young people to become twisted and misshapen

because of events that take place around them or we can make efforts to make it tough for those influences to have a bearing on their lives.

One in five children in Ontario today lives at or below the poverty line. If you grow up in poverty, you're growing up in an environment of despair. If you're growing up in an environment of despair, you are more likely, in fact much more likely, studies tell us, to be living in an environment where there is violence. We've got to fundamentally begin to wrap our heads around this very serious problem of child poverty in Ontario.

About 500,000 children in Ontario are dependent on welfare. I made reference to the fact that there's this myth out there, this fiction, that people on welfare don't want to help themselves, that they're all over the age of 21 and they all sit at home all day, watch TV and drink beer. Half of our recipients of welfare in Ontario today are children. They did nothing to earn or deserve that state of affairs. They're just quiet victims. As I said before, they're not going to write to us, they're not going to lobby us, but just because we don't hear from them, just because they don't vote, doesn't relieve us of the obligation to make genuine efforts to help them.

I want to talk about our employment deficit. A number of promises were contained inside the Common Sense Revolution. One of those promises was that this government was going to create 725,000 jobs. God, that sounded good. When I was campaigning, I kind of wished I could say that, but I wouldn't have felt comfortable making that kind of a promise, reaching that far into the future, trying to predict economic conditions. It was just not something we felt we could do. Nevertheless this government, led by Mike Harris, said yes, they can come up with 725,000 jobs. What that means is 145,000 jobs each year and every year. Do you know where we are today? We find ourselves 165,000 jobs behind that target. That's one heck of a lot of jobs we're missing in Ontario today.

When Mike Harris came into office as Premier, unemployment in Ontario was 8.7%. It has since climbed to 9.1%. The theory was that if we gave Ontarians a tax cut, this would put money into their pockets and they would remove that money from their pockets and they would go out and they would buy that fridge and they would buy that car and then buy that house.

The government has been in office now for two years. The tax cut has been delivered in half, and notwithstanding that, unemployment has gone up, and we find ourselves 165,000 jobs behind the target the Premier set for himself. I didn't set that. Anybody who has looked at this tells us it's going to be impossible for the government to catch up on those 165,000 jobs. That is simply much too optimistic and overly ambitious. They are not going to be able to make up for lost ground when it comes to jobs in Ontario.

One of the most tragic aspects of unemployment today has to do with the rate when it comes to our young people. We are at 18.5% unemployment when it comes to young people in Ontario, but in fact in the last year 27,000 young people stopped looking for work. What that means is that the real youth unemployment in Ontario today is somewhere in the range of 25% to 30%. I think Ontarians recognize it is vitally important for our young

people to be able to do what previous generations of Ontarians have done, which is to look forward to the future with a tremendous sense of optimism.

I remember what my dad used to tell me. He had the seat before me. We were 10 kids at home and it wasn't always easy, but one of the things he used to tell us was: "The world is your oyster. Anything you want is out there for you. You can get it, because it's all there." I wish fathers today and mothers today, parents today, could make the same kind of statement to their children and say it with sincerity and say it in a genuine way, because I don't think they could.

1610

I think what's really important when it comes to this budget is for Ontarians to forget the numbers, forget the experts and just ask themselves in their own home if they are feeling any better. Do you feel any better knowing that the man who promised you he wouldn't close hospitals is closing your community hospital? Does that make you feel good? Do you feel any better knowing that we're going to lay off 15,000 nurses in Ontario hospitals? You've heard some of those horror stories about patients who have lacked for basic nursing care in Ontario hospitals. Does that make you feel good?

Do you feel any better knowing that 30,000 young Ontarians didn't have junior kindergarten last year? Do you feel any better knowing that we are now the lowest funder per capita in the country when it comes to universities? Does that make you feel good and proud?

Do you feel any better knowing that the man who said he was going to cut your taxes is transferring them down to your property tax level?

Do you feel any better knowing that we've cut \$17 million out of our children's aid society budgets? Do you feel any better knowing we've done that at a time when, during the last five years, the reported incidence of abuse of children in their homes has doubled in Ontario?

Forget the numbers, forget the budget, forget the government spin. Ask yourself, knowing all of that in Ontario today, do you feel better? Does it make you feel good? Does it make you feel like saying: "Yeah, bring on the future. I'm ready for it. We are going to make it. We're going to move forward together"? I think most Ontarians would tell you that this government's policies and this government's budget do not inspire them, do not make them hope.

If you really listen to Premier Mike Harris, if you really listen to the policies, do you know what you hear? You hear what we can't do: "We can't do this," and, "We can't do that."

It seems to me that every generation asks the same questions of its political leadership, and the questions are: "How are we going to make it? How are we going to build upon the successes of previous generations in Ontario? Who's going to talk to me about how we're going to meet with success?"

This government does no building, none whatsoever. It wants to take us back. So we're going to have fewer hospitals, we're going to have fewer school boards, but they're going to be bigger boards and in fact bigger hospitals. We're going to have fewer but larger municipalities. It's rather perverse, coming from a government

that's against bigger government. They're forming larger institutions of government bureaucracies in a real sense: bigger hospitals, bigger municipalities, bigger school boards.

When you stop to think of it — some people have trouble with this notion — one of the reasons we happen to hold the distinction of enjoying, at least until this point in time, the best quality of life on the planet is because government has, until this point in time, played a continuing, positive role in the lives of Ontarians. I for one make no apologies for that. Government does have a positive role to play. I believe that just as government can't do it all, neither can people go it alone. There are always going to be groups of people for whom government has a responsibility to speak out and advance their interests. In that grouping I would put our very young, our very old; I'd put our sick, I'd put our poor, I'd put our disabled. I think any government that doesn't advance the cause of those groups is shirking its proper responsibilities.

When you give away a tax cut, when you give away \$5.5 billion —

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): And you borrow it all.

Mr McGuinty: — and then you borrow it on top of that, to make matters worse, what happens is that there is a downside. That money's got to come from somewhere else, and it's coming by and large from those groups who aren't here, who can't advance their causes, who don't mount demonstrations outside Queen's Park, who don't phone us, who don't write to us, who don't lobby us and, by and large, who don't even vote. I believe that is properly the responsibility of government, to make sure those interests are heard.

I want to talk about this deficit of kept promises. We all travel around the province, and from time to time you'll encounter somebody who says: "Well, at least that guy Mike Harris is doing what he said he was going to do. You can't fault him for that. The man's kept his word. He made some promises; he's honouring those promises. He's honouring his commitments." I want to set the record straight on that front.

One of the things he said was — I made reference to this promise earlier on and I think it's worth repeating — "Certainly I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals." To date, he has put 22 hospitals on the chopping block in Ontario.

What else did he say? He said he was going to create 725,000 new jobs in Ontario, and to date he is 165,000 jobs behind that target. Everybody who knows anything about this stuff will tell you there is no way he's ever going to make up for that lag. You just can't make up 165,000 jobs that should have been created by now.

When it comes to the environment, do you know what he said? He said: "I don't think you'll find a cent there cut out of the environment. We were able to find \$6 billion in cuts without cutting the environment." That's what Mike Harris said when he was leader of the third party. He said he was going to be able to deliver on his tax cut, he was going to be able to make his other cuts without touching the environment. Do you know what he's cut when it comes to the Ministry of Environment?

He's cut out \$121 million. That's 42% of the budget. He's laid off about one third of the people who worked there. We have now seriously impaired our ability as a province to inspect what is going on out there and to enforce existing laws.

Something else Mike Harris said in the Common Sense Revolution: "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." Let me give you the facts now: To date, he's brought in \$225 million in new user fees for seniors and the poor who purchase medications through the Ontario drug benefit plan.

Let me just comment for a moment on election promises. They are the subject of some considerable disrepute. One of the reasons of course is that from time to time you have a politician who makes a promise and doesn't keep it. When you make that promise, it's clearly made in an effort to induce people to vote for you, and when you break it, when you don't honour that commitment, you leave people in the lurch. What you've done for seniors and what you've done for our poor and what you've done for our disabled who purchase medication when you've brought in user fees is you've really breached a very serious commitment.

1620

Agriculture: Mike Harris said, "There will be no cuts to agriculture." No cuts. To date, he has cut agriculture by \$80 million. That includes \$22 million in cuts to policy and farm finance; \$10 million in cuts to education, research and labs; and \$11 million in cuts to food industry development: \$80 million.

Municipal downloading: Speaker, I know you've been looking forward to this one; listen to this one now. This is what Mike Harris said in the Common Sense Revolution. He said, "There is only one...taxpayer — you. We will work closely with municipalities to ensure that any actions we take will not result in increases to local property taxes." To date, he has downloaded \$1.3 billion in new costs on to our municipalities.

Mike Harris the Taxfighter has become Mike Harris the Taxhiker. We didn't understand that when he was focusing on reducing taxes, he was focusing on reducing taxes at the provincial level. Maybe we didn't read the fine print. Maybe the fault was entirely ours, and for that we beg forgiveness. But it's also possible that what the Premier intended to do was to download financial responsibilities on to property taxpayers so he could say: "I've got my fiscal house in order. That problem is yours." Those who are going to take the heat, of course, are going to be our representatives at the municipal level. But I'm convinced that property taxpayers are going to see through that. They're going to see through that and lay the blame where it properly lies, which is at the feet of Premier Mike Harris.

Something else contained in the budget that I found rather petty and demeaning was the effort to lay blame on the federal government. I'll tell you why it was rather surprising to me. I want to relate something that was said by Mike Harris when he was leader of the third party, something he said in this very Legislature on May 11, 1994, almost three years ago to the day. At that time, while he was giving a speech, he said:

"Instead, the government now of Ontario is reduced to whining and squabbling with other levels of government.

This wasn't the way it was for 190 years in Confederation in Ontario, and it wasn't the way it was in the 42 years previous to this last decade.... In Ontario we have always been the leaders in Confederation, and we've now become the whiners in Confederation."

I want to tell you that clearly and most distinctly yesterday in this Legislature I heard whining. It came from a member of the government who was whining about something that was done or not done on the part of the federal government. But there's more stuff here. We're just warming up.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr McGuinty: Thank you for restraining them, Speaker. I can't speak fast enough for them. They want to hear this stuff, but I'm just not a fast talker. I want to continue. Mike Harris said:

"So we can continue to complain that other levels of government are not pulling their weight. We can blame local levels of government or we can blame the federal government, or we can turn our energies towards making Ontario more competitive.... When I hear other provinces coming to the federal government, which is \$40 billion in deficit, and whining that we need more money, particularly Ontario, this province whose taxpayers pay the bulk of the federal taxes, are on the hook for the bulk of the federal deficit, we must get our own affairs in order.... All we have heard from the government is whining that we need more money from a bankrupt federal government. I believe that it is time for us to stop whining. It is time for us to fix that which is broken right here in our own province. It's time for us to take back our own destiny again, get our own affairs in order again."

Clearly something happened to Mike Harris. The distance between that side of the House and this side of the House is not that great, but obviously something occurred in his transition, his walking from this side to that side, because he made eminent good sense in this particular regard, and now he makes nonsense.

The point I'm trying to make today is that a budget is more than just a financial statement; it's a statement of values. If you look at this budget and you look at the values that inform it, I think you will quickly determine that those values are not shared by the great majority of Ontarians.

I believe Ontarians today value a top-quality health care system, a system that is able to deliver care in a compassionate way, where it's needed and when it's needed. I think most Ontarians today believe we have to have the best possible system of education in place and that when you compel boards to eliminate junior kindergarten programs and when you put us in last place in the country when it comes to funding for our universities, you're not getting us ready for the next century, you're not giving us a reason to be hopeful. I think most Ontarians would disagree with that, and they would expect that their government would look after those kinds of things and make sure that we are preserving or enhancing our system of education at minimum.

I think most Ontarians would tell you that if they have to choose between a tax cut and a top-quality system of education and a top-quality health care system in Ontario, and if they have to choose between a tax cut and stealing

\$17 million from children's aid societies so that there are 340 fewer case workers able to knock on doors in Ontario and make sure that children who are the subject of abuse are cared for, most Ontarians would tell you they're not comfortable with that, that they don't share those kinds of values.

I think most Ontarians would tell you they don't believe the tax cut is worth the price we're paying for it. They would tell you they understand that there's a cost connected with it and that the cost is simply too great. The cost is being paid by people, but it's especially being paid by people who are in those groups I mentioned earlier, who don't lobby us on a regular basis, who aren't powerful groups, whom we have a special responsibility to represent; that's our very young, our very old, our sick, our poor and our disabled.

I am convinced that when the impact of this budget, combined with the impact of the previous budget, combined with the impact of the Mike Harris policies, is felt all the way down — that's the real trickle-down that we ought to be keeping our eye on in here, not this hocus-pocus trickle-down economics which has been tried and found wanting in other jurisdictions.

1630

What we've really got to keep our eye on is the trickle-down impact of Harris policies. When people feel that impact, they will clearly begin to send a message to this government that they don't share those values, they are not comfortable with the kind of Ontario we are creating. There is no building going on in Ontario today. If you can see it, then please point to it. Who is doing anything in government today to build our province, to invest, especially in our people by way of education, and to maintain our investment in our systems of health care? Who is doing that? This government is not doing that.

I'm convinced that when Ontarians fully understand the impact of this budget and these policies, they will turn their heads away from this government and say: "That is not my doing. I am not comfortable with that. Who else is out there?" I want to tell you on behalf of my party that we're out there, that we're listening, that we're renewing ourselves, that we're getting ready for 1999 and that it's important for us to hear from them. We understand that ultimately the very best kind of change is change that's brought about in reliance on the goodwill and the expertise of people who find themselves out there.

Is there room for improvement in education? Absolutely. But if you want to bring about the best kind of change, you've got to tap into the goodwill and the expertise of trustees and teachers and parents and students. They are not all obstacles to be overcome, you know; they are resources to be tapped. That's the approach I'm going to bring to government with my party.

When it comes to changing health care, is there room for finding efficiencies in health care? Absolutely. I am not by any means a defender of the status quo. I want to make that clear. But if you want to bring about that change, it's important to tap into the goodwill of our hospital administrators, our doctors, our nurses and our patients. They have the goodwill, they have the expertise, and they are not all obstacles to be overcome; they are resources to be tapped.

If you want to lend new shape to municipal governments in Ontario today, if you want to bring about the best kind of change there, then it's important to talk to the people who live in those communities and it's important to talk to their representatives. They're not all defenders of their own turf; they're not all purely self-interested, small-minded and petty.

There are very few people in Ontario today who are really defenders of the status quo. Most people understand that we've got to bring about positive change. But that's the key descriptive, that it's positive. It's got to be progressive. It's got to be changed for the better. We can only bring about that kind of change if we begin to understand that the people who live in this province are there to help. They are not obstacles to be overcome; they are resources to be tapped.

Perhaps one of the saddest commentaries I could make about this government is that they have lost their sense of privilege, the privilege of government, the sense that they are here to serve the people outside this place. You get the impression of late that this government senses that their job is to tell people out there what's right for them and their opinions don't count, that they're all obstacles to be overcome and they are impediments in the way of change. Clearly, that is not my position; that is not the position of my party.

I want to move the following amendment:

I move that the resolution moved by the Minister of Finance on May 6 "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words following the words "that this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance continues to implement a tax cut at the expense of the people of Ontario; and

"That in a mad rush to give a tax cut, the Minister of Finance has created a human deficit which all Ontarians will be forced to pay for years to come; and

"That this budget confirms another \$500 million will be cut for hospitals on top of existing cuts; and

"That the only new money for health care in this budget is for nurses' severance and the closing of hospitals; and

"That this budget includes \$300 million new cuts to education instead of returning cuts to programs such as junior kindergarten, special education and adult education; and

"That this budget does nothing for quality classroom education or children in classrooms; and

"That this budget completely disregards the one in five children in Ontario living in poverty; and

"That the \$17 million this government cut from children's aid societies is not replaced; and

"That this government is falling far short of the 725,000 jobs they promised Ontarians in the last election; and

"That, while the rest of Canada gained jobs over the last seven months, Ontario lost 11,000 jobs; and

"That because the people of Ontario would not choose a tax cut at the expense of quality health care, quality education, quality child care and higher levels of employment; and

"Because both the finance minister and Premier understand the price of everything and the cost of nothing;

"Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government."

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved that the resolution moved by the Minister of Finance on May 6 "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words following the words "that this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance continues to implement a tax cut at the expense of the people of Ontario; and

"That in a mad rush to give a tax cut, the Minister of Finance has created a human deficit which all Ontarians will be forced to pay for years to come; and

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"That, while the rest of Canada gained jobs over the last seven months, Ontario lost 11,000 jobs; and

"That because the people of Ontario would not choose a tax cut at the expense of quality health care, quality education, quality child care, and higher levels of employment; and

"Because both the finance minister and Premier understand the price of everything and the cost of nothing;

"Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government."

Further debate?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? It is agreed.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

The House adjourned at 1640.

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Tony Clement, Carl DeFaria, John Gerretsen,
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Resources development /

Développement des ressources

Chair / Présidente: Brenda Elliott

Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Vacant

Dominic Agostino, David Christopherson, Ted Chudleigh,
Marilyn Churley, Sean G. Conway, Brenda Elliott,
Doug Galt, John Hastings, Pat Hoy, W. Leo Jordan,
Bart Maves, John R. O'Toole, Jerry J. Ouellette,
Joseph Spina

Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Annamarie Castrilli

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Dwight Duncan

Marion Boyd, Jack Carroll, Annamarie Castrilli,
Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees,
Gary L. Leadston, Lyn McLeod, Julia Munro,
Dan Newman, John L. Parker, Richard Patten,
Bruce Smith, Bud Wildman

Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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